

MR. COLEMAN
Gent.

ENID DINNIS



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MR. COLEMAN, GENT.

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A Romance

By

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Mr. Coleman, Gent.

To the one who gave me the idea for this Romance, and most of the historical material: whose kindly interest inspired its beginning, and whose dear memory has been the incentive for its finish, I dedicate this, my first novel,

To Honnor Morten.

6636

In view of what many readers may consider a striking resemblance between the following story and Monsignor Benson's "Odds Fish," the Author thinks it may be of interest to state that the MS. of "Mr. Coleman, Gent," was completed in the June of 1914. The appearance of "Odds Fish" caused the Author to lay it aside for a period.

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FOREWORD

THE story of Mr. Coleman, Gent., does not pretend to be history. It does not even aspire to be hypothetical history—it is not set before the romance-reading public on the grounds of truth being stranger than fiction. On the other hand, it may bring forward the claim that fiction can be truer than fact, and so boldly appeal to the reader, who knows enough of history to look for truth elsewhere.

The data is drawn from three sources:—the contemporary Histories of the Popish Plot, in which Mr. Coleman is shown to be a criminal of the deepest dye, the Histories and National Biographies of modern times, which simply find him a meddlesome fellow of shallow intellect and doubtful motives, and the Archives of the Catholic Church, where his name is recorded as “the venerable Edward Coleman, martyr.”

All we claim for the following pages is that they nowhere (so far as we know), contradict any fact recorded historically, and that they contain a hypothesis which covers the conflicting descriptions of Mr. Coleman, and harmonises the complexities in

the character of a man, who was both an ascetic and a *bon-vivant*; a self-interested meddler and a trusted friend; a vain and arrogant disputer, and one who, as his Trial shows us, when reviled, reviled not again.

PART I

NED

PROLOGUE

TWO distinguished gentlemen were walking through the streets of Cambridge. They had left King's College chapel, ablaze with a fair illumination of waxen candles, where they had been to hear the sermon preached by the eminent Dr. Burnet. It would be the correct thing to chronicle the text upon which the discourse was founded, but, unfortunately, it has been lost in oblivion—it certainly would have been something about kings, and that something would have been of a nature highly flattering to the monarchy, for it was preached on the occasion of the anniversary of the martyrdom of King Charles I, of blessed memory, and, moreover, His Highness the Duke of York had been present. One of the gentlemen wore academic garb; he was, in fact, the Master of St. John's, and he was taking his distinguished guest, a visitor from London, back to his chamber to collation.

The other was a remarkably alert and intelligent gentleman. He looked from right to left as they passed along the streets, and nothing, one may be sure, escaped his quick eye.

"The city hath improved," he remarked, "since I was here in '54, ten years back, the air then seemed to me thick and infected by the fens, and the buildings mean and inconsiderable."

"Ah! the times have changed," his begowned companion replied. "Cambridge was in an evil plight in those days. The restoration of the monarchy hath altered all things for the good. Long live the King!" he added, piously rounding off his decorously loyal explanation of his visitor's new impression of the city.

"The sermon was most seasonable," the latter went on.

"The bishop is a remarkably fine Latinist, well worthy of his distinguished audience. Much scholarship was represented in the chapel, methinks. Our Church is well served these days, God be praised!"

"This discourse will, doubtless, be printed," the Master said. "Truth to tell, there were points hard to catch at the first hearing. The bishop is like to become the leading court preacher, they say."

They were passing a street corner. "How now?" his friend interrupted, "what is the pother up yonder?" In the by-street, an evil-looking, narrow lane, a crowd had gathered. It was partly formed of black gowned undergraduates, and partly of a rough rabble, the off-scouring of the city purlieus. A huge shout of laughter broke out from it every moment. The Master's alert companion pressed forward on to the outskirts of the crowd. In its centre, in a cleared space, a man stood preaching. A strange, very dirty old man, with a long white beard and tangled hair. His face was seamed and wrinkled, his eyes a deep sea-blue, like a sailor's. He was dressed in a ragged brown habit encircled by a knotted cord. Behind him, in attendance, there sat a lean, brown, smooth-coated cur-dog, quietly regarding the crowd.

The Master of St. John's smiled. "Oh, that's the mad Capuchin," he said. "He is ever preaching, and they get much sport out of him."

"Doth he preach popery?" the other asked, rather sharply.

The Angelican divine laughed. "He is quite harmless," he said. "His wits are gone, for one thing—he suffered much hardship, they say, in prison for many years—and, moreover, he preaches in Italian. He starts, as a rule, in English, and then wanders off into the other tongue, which doth divert the crowd mightily. I'm told he recites the poetry of one Jacopone da Todi, a Franciscan fanatic, who lived long ago in Italy. We lock him up now and again, but as a rule he goeth free."

"I have read the works of Jacopone," his friend said, and he gazed with interest at the quaint figure.

"Hey," the Master ejaculated, "there is one yonder who can follow what he saith. Do you see that dark youth? that is one of my best scholars. He hath an amazing mastery of modern tongues, and he speaks this Italian like his mother-tongue, although he hath never been out of England. We have retained him at the University to tutor the youths in tongues."

The visitor looked in the direction indicated. He saw a tall, dark stripling, with an eager, pale face, and bright black eyes, who stood listening to the speaker's "jargon" with evident interest. While the crowd laughed and gibed he fixed the madman with intent gaze, and listened with all gravity.

"He should have been at Sermon this afternoon," the Master of St. John's observed, surveying his pupil with some dissatisfaction. "With your leave I will cross over and speak to him. The lad is flighty and wanting in sobriety."

At this moment the preacher, who had apparently got to the end of his discourse, suddenly threw out his arms. He lifted his withered old face upward, smiling with wonderful sweetness, and gazed a long way before him with the vivid blue eyes, from which the sight had all but departed. The loose sleeves of his habit hung in tatters. The crowd shrieked with mirth at the sight of the hanging fragments as he stretched his arms. Changing his speech to the vernacular, he cried, in ringing tones:—

"Arise, arise! and Christ shall give you light!"

The rabble roared with delight. The young man opposite straightened himself unconsciously, his eyes still fixed on the weird figure. A missile, thrown with no particular ill-will, struck the preacher on the cheek. A champion arose from the crowd, and challenged the author of the pleasantry, and a general hubbub ensued. Next there appeared the guardians of the peace, and the disturber of the same, to wit, the preacher, was roughly taken into custody, and marched off between the two minions of Law-and-Order. The brown cur, who had surveyed the proceedings with a certain philosophic interest, rose,

wagged his tail, and calmly prepared to trot in his master's wake.

"Go to!" one of the officers said, and administered a kick in the animal's direction. The creature gave a howl, retreated, then showed signs of still carrying out his original attention. His owner looked with troubled eyes at the animal. "May I not take him with me?" he asked. The answer was another attempt at discouraging the persistent disciple, followed by another yelp. The unpedigreed animal had anticipated the blow by rolling over on his back and lying in a deprecating attitude with his four legs in the air. Nevertheless, he made a third attempt to follow the ragged figure. At this juncture the Master of St. John's beheld his prize scholar step forward. "I'll keep your dog for you till they let you out," the latter said, addressing the old man. "I'll take good care of him, and you'll find me at John's. My name is Edward Coleman."

"I thank thee with all my heart," the medicant said. "Edward is thy name? Well, this is Jacopone, a true son of St. Francis, for he weareth the brown habit." The merry smile again illuminated his battered old countenance. Then he became grave. He raised his hand and made the sign of the cross, while the crowd guffawed afresh.

"The Lord bless thee," he said, "and keep thee. The Lord show His face to thee and have mercy on thee. The Lord turn his countenance towards thee, and give thee peace!" Then again the smile, and:—"God bless thee, Brother Ned!"

The Master of St. John's and his friend pursued their way. "It was most mightily diverting," the former said. "Did I not tell thee that the mad brother always made good sport?"

"Yes, I was much diverted," his companion said. Nevertheless, the incident is not recorded among the various amusing things that are to be found in the chronicle that bears his name.

CHAPTER I

MR ROBERT COLEMAN stood between the sun-dial on the lawn at Burnt Ely and the steps leading up to the terrace. He stood with his arms folded and his head bent, and his large, well-favoured, extremely solemn countenance wore a sombre frown. His entire demeanour was such that the reader will be readily forgiven for concluding that Mr. Robert Coleman was hatching a plot, a more or less normal occupation in the year 1664. The Squire of Burnt Ely was indeed thinking hard, but his thoughts were perfectly innocuous, and bore no political purport. The cause of them stood before him, no emissary from prince or pretender, but merely Miriam, the kitchen-wench, a squat damsel with eyes that looked askew, and a halting gait.

Mr. Coleman lifted his chin from his breast and regarded gloomily a certain cherry-coloured ribbon bow which lent an audacious bit of colour to the sad grey homespun gown worn by the serving-maid. "And you dressed yourself in this unseemly way," her master remarked, "because Mr. Edward was expected?"

The abashed damsel became sorely discomfited under the austere gaze of the statuesque young squire. She shuffled her feet, and fixed the sun-dial fortuitously with one eye—an attack of small-pox in early infancy had entirely spoiled the symmetry of Miriam's eyes. "It seemed like a holiday," she murmured "Mr. Edward he do make things bright."

"You must remove it at once," Mr. Robert Coleman said, severely. "How came your mistress to allow it? Was ever such a thing seen on a serving-wench in a godly household! Ah, yes, I called to you to tell me at what hour your mistress expects Mr. Edward—she hath haply

mentioned it to Hannah. Nay, stop! I will enquire of her myself, it would be more seemly. You understand? you will not ask Hannah this."

Miriam understood. She limped off, an abject figure, with the offensive ribbon crumpled up in her hand, more than ever impressed with the immensity of her master's personality. Mr. Robert Coleman ascended the terrace steps and entered the library through the window that led on to the lawn. In the wide aperture there stood a ponderous oak table, on which was set an ink-stand and a collection of quill pens. In front of these was placed a vellum-bound volume, the cover of which was emblazoned with a reprehensibly gay lion, the armorial emblem which the owners of Burnt Ely had come by some two generations back. This tome, as was neatly proclaimed on its front page, was no less than the journal kept by Mr. Robert Coleman, gent. Its owner sat himself down before it—he had at least a quarter of an hour at his disposal. He proceeded to unlock the gold clasp that secured privacy to his memoranda with a small key which he wore attached to his person, and made the following entries:—

"April—1664. My brother Edward doth return from Cambridge this morning. His tutor hath great praise for his abilities, especially in acquiring languages, and in the use of his pen in composition, which gift doth run in our family. He hath disconcerted me, however, by telling how he do not attend sermon regularly on Lord's day. The wench Miriam hath appeared this morning wearing most immodestly a bright ribbon bow which I did bid her remove. She did bring the breakfast dishes in this morning in the place of Hannah, who hath colic, a most ill-favoured wench as doth hurt the eye to look upon, I trust my wife will find a comelier when next she changes. The kidneys were of remarkable flavour done in the new way called devilled which my wife hath learned about at Lavenham Hall. I pray that Edward hath not been fooling this wench for she did say strangely that she was wearing the ribbon for his home-coming. It may, indeed, be light ways that keep him from sermon on Lord's Day, and not

popery, which I had half feared, for which the Lord be praised. I have ordered that there be devilled kidneys for breakfast to-morrow, and that Hannah do be well enough to serve."

The diarist paused and read over what he had written with obvious content. He gazed out of the window meditatively at the flat Suffolk landscape. A busy wind-mill was the only thing that militated against the smooth, unvaried calm of the spreading fen lands, once the property of the Abbey at Bury, and somehow typified the circumscribed activities that made up the life of Burnt Ely Hall.

The writer might have gathered further inspirations, but at that moment a sound behind him caused him to turn round. Standing there, with expectant round eyes fixed on him, like a miniature Patience on a quite negligible monument, was a very small boy, with a close-cropped head, and severely cut garments.

"Unky Ned!" the image proclaimed, having achieved attention without violating the rule which forbade his disturbing his father while engaged in literary occupations. "Unky Ned's come!" Then, defiantly throwing everything to the winds, he shouted, almost in the manner of the modern child, "Unky Ned! Unky Ned!"

"Thou shouldst not be here at this 'hour." Mr. Coleman admonished his small son. "Where is thy nurse? Hath she not told thee that the library is no place for children like thee? Thy brother Robin doth never intrude. Dost thou understand?"

The small boy listened to his parent's rhetoric quite stolidly. "Unky Ned," he repeated firmly, and ran to the door, through which there entered a young man.

He was really a very gay young man, albeit that he was rather dusty and travel-stained. His clothes were of the Cavalier cut, though sober in colour, and he carried a remarkably "showy" plumed hat. His curly black hair was by no means close cut, in fact, it approximated love-locks.

The primly-apparelled squire of Burnt Ely surveyed the

new-comer with a curiously embarrassed air. "Good day, Edward," he said, and looked at the plumed hat, and glanced away quickly, as though it were a sight that a right-minded man would prefer not to see.

"Good day, Rob," the new arrival replied, and threw the plumed hat down on the table with just a suspicion of defiance in his manner. He had flushed slightly, and he certainly was not at his ease.

Mr. Robert took another sidelong glance at his young brother's "make-up." He felt it to be the outward and visible sign of some inward and as yet unascertained form of depravity. He was already half afraid of this member of the family who had developed abilities at College hitherto unsuspected. Some twelve years his brother's senior, he had acted in a father's place to him since the death of the Reverend Samuel Coleman some years before. This Mr. Edward Coleman, with his degree, his reputed knowledge of languages, and his extraordinary facility in composition, was likely to be someone different from the feckless Ned who had made such futile efforts to acquire the commonsense virtues of his home circle, and who had, consequently, been held in some contempt.

"I was writing my journal," he remarked, rather stiffly, and prepared with exaggerated deliberation to fit the key into the clasp.

"Doth it contain State secrets?" Ned inquired. "Hast thou turned conspirator, Rob?"

"I have no incriminating secrets," Mr. Coleman said, complacently, "but did I leave it unlocked the wenches might find it sufficiently agreeable reading, they are all of them scholared."

This idea seemed to tickle young Mr. Ned hugely. He burst into a fit of laughter. Robert was slightly offended.

"I trust, Edward," he said, "that you are careful with your papers. I hear from Dr. Cullum that you have a nimble pen, and a nimble pen may get a man into trouble before he knows where he is, if he be as indiscreet as thou'rt."

Ned threw his long body across a big, leather-covered

chair. "My Faith! I wish I could write something that would get me into trouble," quoth he, "but there's no danger—I don't know anything, so I can't write. I'm a dumb dog!"

Mr. Robert Coleman, gent. stared at his brother.

"But thou hast the King's prize for Composition," he gasped, dropping into the familiar "thee and thou" mode of address. "Dr. Callum hath great praise for thy writing! and in six languages he declares that thou hath written essays."

Mr. Edward thrust out a leg petulantly. "A prize ode on Greece, an essay on the Trojans—a treatise on Ancient Rome? What's the good? I want to know how people live now." He gazed out of the window at the aggressively busy windmill.

Mr. Robert looked thoughtfully at his young brother. It was an additional embarrassment that he had adopted the new mode of speech which the squire still retained for state occasions only. "I want to know—what's worth knowing," the other went on—he was in a peevish mood, this young man from Cambridge—"and I can't because I haven't been out to see. What can a man learn by stopping at Cambridge, even after he's taken his degree? I want to ride abroad and see things."

He had said it, and he already felt better.

The puritan squire of Burnt Ely surveyed his new brother with a kind of curiosity that was not wholly wanting in respect.

"Edward," he asked, in hushed tones, "art thou become dissolute?"

Ned sat up straight. The blood rushed into his face. He seemed inclined to say many things, but he said nothing.

"I hear," the other went on, blandly—he had got back into his favourite character as mentor—"that thou art not regular at Sermon on Lord's Day. There is much ungodly living at the University this last four years. I would not have suspected thee of popery?"—he hazarded this latter with real apprehension in his voice. Ned smiled, in spite

of his wounded feelings, the idea was so ludicrous. Robert was visibly relieved. "A man should keep the Lord's Day," he opined, "even if he forget true godliness during the week . . ."

Ned jumped up and interrupted him. His pale face had become very pink. He stood there and looked at his brother, and then made up his mind to "out with it."

"Rob," he said, "I'll tell thee why I don't go to Sermon. It's what they preach—always the devil. Isn't it God who's over all things, and isn't He good? Why should the devil ever rule all, and be in everything?" His dark eyes were shining, and looked appealingly enough into the face of his brother. Young Ned was relieving himself of his inmost feelings, and he had already become abashed at his own earnestness. "I want to hear of love and beauty," he went on, still appealing to the potential understanding of the man before him, "but it's denunciation—always, always the devil doing something or other, and doing it uncommonly well."

Mr. Robert followed this outpouring quite calmly. It was entirely in Edward's manner, though the matter was of a new nature—he had hitherto tiraded against such things as the sale of an ancient equine retainer, or the resort to the stocks for curing simple Sam, the village silly-billy, of congenital idiocy. He made no attempt to follow its meaning, but his brother's words suggested a train of thought to the diarist.

"Didst thou ever taste devilled kidneys at Cambridge?" he asked. "'Tis a mighty fine new way of cooking them that thy sister hath learnt."

Edward recovered his indelicately exposed feelings as best he could. "I make no doubt but what they are to be had," he responded with due solemnity. "As I said, the devil is in everything. He is most probably in the food also. The Master, most certainly would have his kidneys devilled, like his sermons." Being but eighteen years old he found a ready refuge in cynicism.

"Oh! Oo!"

An opportune diversion cut short his flow of epigram.

The small Dick, had obtained possession of his uncle's plumed hat and succeeded in detaching the plume. The owner of the godless headgear turned on him.

"Thou little——angel!" he said.

Dick opened his mouth for a precautionary howl. He closed it again, and countermanded the tears that had all but gathered in his blue eyes. Uncle Ned was laughing! Dick looked up roguishly.

"Devilled hat," he said, and threw the mutilated headgear at its owner.

Here the father intervened. "Thou art a wicked boy," he said, standing over the minute culprit. "How durst thou do this mischief?"

"Nay, nay, Rob," Ned interrupted. "Why blame him? I warrant thou dost not approve of that plume. Dicky hath wrought a virtuous action, like Mr. Dowsing when he chipped the wings off the cherubs in church."

"Mr. Dowsing had a high and godly reason for what he did," Mr. Coleman senior replied, "but this child doth not act rationally, but from evil mischief."

"Well, at any rate," Edward said, "I must needs now go in more Christian apparel, unless, indeed, Elizabeth will right the wrong and fix it in for me again?" The point of casuistry thus raised was not taken up by Robert, he confined his attention to his son, now sufficiently subdued. "Get thee to bed," he said, "and I will instruct that thou stay there for the rest of the day, and this afternoon thou shalt have a whipping."

The Solomonesque régime that obtained at Burnt Ely Hall, was nothing unusual, it must be remembered in fairness to Mr. Robert. Even Ned attempted no appeal for mercy against the sentence. He had been reared on a similar code. The five-year-old himself accepted it in quite a Spartan fashion. Ned picked him up and whispered in his ear as he trotted off obediently with his instructions to the mistress of the nursery. "I've got something rare to show thee, Dick—a dog and his name is Jacopone."

Mr. Robert Coleman had returned to the writing table, and was putting a finishing entry into his diary. "Edward

hath arrived," he wrote. "He tells me that the Master of Trinity do have devilled kidneys on his table."

Ned found his sister-in-law sitting in the long, low ceilinged dining room sewing. She was a pleasant-looking, stoutish woman, with blonde hair and pale blue eyes. A boy of about seven sat at her side with a lesson book on his knees. He was the eldest son and heir, and he possessed the most unimpeachable manners. He rose and greeted his uncle with all respect and decorum.

"And how is Baby Betty?" Edward asked. "She was exactly one week old when I saw her last, and she favoured me, the nurse said. Doth she still favour her uncle?"

"She hath cut a tooth yesterday," her mother said. "She is dark in the complexion, like thee, rather than her father, but she may grow up comely for all that."

"So she hath honoured my coming by cutting a tooth," Ned remarked. "She is the second lady to have done honour to my home-coming. I met Arabella-alias-Miriam on my way hither, and she was holding a bit of ribbon in her hand. The master, she said, had just told her to take it off. 'Was it worn in my honour?' I asked, and the wench, blushing mightily, admitted that it was, and now she conceives that I must be a magician to have known without being told."

"It was very wrong of her," Robert's wife said, "to try and wear such an unseemly thing on her, and she a serving-maid, too. I'm thankful that Hannah hath got over her fit of colic, for my brother cannot bear the sight of Miriam, the wench is that uncomely."

"Poor Arabella!" Edward said.

"Thou must not call her Arabella," his sister-in-law reproved him. "Thou know'st Robert had her name changed to Miriam. I wished for Mary, but thy brother preferred Miriam; it is an Old Testament name, and more suited to a good Christian maid. The girl is virtuous enough. The new serving-man hath come from London. He is apt in his work, but he pleases me not, somehow." Ned listened to this and to various other domestic details with sufficient interest. "And thou, Ned," Elizabeth said,

after a while, for she was a kind soul, "I suppose we shall be having thee a court preacher before we know where we are, or the Master of thy college."

"I hope not," the perverse young man answered. "I don't want to be either. The only preacher I ever liked listening to was a maniac."

"Was he a papist?" Elizabeth asked, in swift and instinctive alarm.

"He was a mountebank, dressed in a comical brown frock with a cord round his middle," Ned explained, "and he never mentioned the devil once."

His sister laughed. "It must be amusing to live in a town," she said wistfully. "He must have made thee very merry."

Ned shrugged his shoulders. "I'm sick of Cambridge," he said. "I want to travel and see the world."

"Thou'rt become discontented, Ned," Mrs. Coleman said. "I should have thought that a man might amuse himself mightily well in a place like Cambridge, unless, indeed, he were wanting wicked amusements"—she looked up shrewdly from her needle-work at Ned.

The young man flushed angrily, as he had done at his brother's similar conclusions—he was absurdly sensitive, this perverse young man. "I don't want to be amused," he retorted. "I want to learn about these things that one hears of. All is smooth and well ordered at College. One knows nothing of the world where men are down-trodden and wronged. I want to know exactly how much misery does exist."

"And then thou would'st set it right," Elizabeth said. "A pretty one, thou! Thy mother did often tell me how thou did cause all the pother in nursery when thou wast a child, thinking that thou didst know better than thy elders."

"I got all the whippings, anyway," Ned said. His recollections of his childhood were dreary enough. The reverend Samuel Coleman had been a puritan of the severest type, his eldest son had kept up the tradition from a sense of filial piety that his small sons might well regret

rather than from an actual sourness of nature. He went on stubbornly: "I mean to ask Robert to let me go to London and see a few things for myself."

"He won't do that," Robert's wife said, with conviction. "I've had a humour before now to see the life in London—the Parks, and Whitehall, and the great buildings. But thy brother would have none of it."

She gave a little patient sigh. "They have brought in the dinner," she said. "Thou wilt be hungry after thy ride, Ned."

CHAPTER II

DINNER was a meal of much magnificence at Burnt Ely Hall. A number of dishes were served with a kind of glum ceremony, and a profound gloom immediately settled over the singularly unfestive board. Occasionally Mr. Robert made an observation on the quality of the food, but table-talk on irrelevant topics would have been considered as indecent as talking in church during prayers. The whole place was, in fact, pervaded by a spirit of sour luxury, on the principle, it would seem, that a thing might be "carnal," so long as it were not a joy, and the good things of the flesh, if accepted in a spirit of reverent depression, might be indulged in without fear of condemnation.

After the great function was over Ned approached his brother with the request that was seething in his mind. "Rob," he said, attaching himself to the squire, who was pacing up and down the terrace after the nap which followed dinner. "I've long thought that I'd like to go out and see a little of the world. Could I not ride to London this vacation and stop there for a time? It would be no great cost, and I've set my mind on it this long while." His tone was pleading, and his eager black eyes full of entreaty.

"What nonsense is this?" Robert enquired. "London! London is no place for a godly youth, and I trust thou art still God-fearing? Is not Cambridge good enough for thee? A virtuous man should wish for no better place than a University city wherein to learn of the world."

Edward stared across the fields at the wind-mill, and hated it. "That mill yonder," he said, "what does it know, except about the fens? yet there are hills, aye, mountains somewhere. I feel like that—windmill!"

Human nature being the same in the seventeenth century, we may take it that Mr. Ned qualified the windmill as a modern youth would have done.

"I must admit," his brother said, "that Cambridge hath so far failed to knock sense into thee. What in Heaven's name, art thou babbling about? Certainly I should not dream of letting thee go to London. My conscience would not allow of it, Edward. Even a wise man might go astray there, or one that was in a state of grace."

Edward accepted the implied indictment along with the refusal. He walked off without another word. It was characteristic of his habit of mind that it did not occur to him at this juncture to defy opinion at Burnt Ely Hall, and ride off and place his talents on the market. Rebellion against the ponderous moral bondage was unthought of. That human respect, which makes a coward of a physically brave man, and a confirmed dwarf of a potential giant, held the Squire's young brother in thrall, albeit that he was a young man of parts—parts that were to go to make up a strangely complex whole.

He walked off into the house, merely sulky. In the hall he was waylaid by his young nephew, Robin, who was about to attend in the library for instruction from Mr Stock, the minister.

"Dick wishes me to say," the son and heir announced, "that he will see you in the nursery this afternoon. Nurse hath gone awalking with Tom Rich, the new serving-man."

Ned, his malignant "huff" already on the wane, was swift to obey orders; he hastened up to the nursery, a long room at the top of the house under the sloping roof. Dick was in bed, but apparently not unduly depressed.

"Where's Waggabony?" he shouted, as his uncle made his appearance.

"I've left him at the cottage," Ned said. "You see, Waggabony's not a gentleman—he's a beggar-dog, so I durst not bring him here."

"Where did thee get him?"

"From an old brown man who they all said was mad. I took care of Jacopone while he went to prison."

"Why was he mad?" Dick, like all children, liked to get at the root of things.

"Well, you see," Edward said. "He went about saying that God was good, and that he made people to be jolly and want to sing songs, and stand on their heads, and he talked in a strange language that wasn't Greek or Latin."

"I don't like God," Dick said with conviction. "Was the old man really mad?"

His uncle looked at him meditatively. "'Pon my word, Dick," he declared, "I wonder?"

"Where is he?" was the next query.

"He's in prison, so Waggabony's mine for the time being. He's just Boney when we are in a hurry, but Waggabony is quite too nice a name to cut short, except when it's a case of emergency."

Dick chuckled at his uncle's long words. "I've had my whipping," he said suddenly. "I kicked twice."

"I hope it didn't hurt?" the grown-up said. "The whipping, I mean, not the kicks!"

"Not much," the victim said, philosophically.

"Isn't it plaguey dull, lying in bed?" the uncle asked, but the bed-ridden culprit made no appeal for sympathy.

"Would you mind," he said invalidishly, "of your great kindness, passing me that yonder?"

The thing indicated was a large cabbage leaf. Ned handed it to him. "Can I fetch the surgeon?" he asked with much solicitude. "Shall I bid him administer to thee six sugar-plums?"

"I thank you," Dick said primly, taking the cabbage leaf. "I'll have fifty large sugar-plums for my physic." They enjoyed the joke hugely.

"But what is the cabbage for?" his mystified uncle asked.

Dick lifted the bedclothes. "I've got Rabby here," he explained.

Inside the bed there was huddled a large white, supremely uncomfortable rabbit, who apparently was far from appreciating the exotic conditions of its present existence.

"Robin brought him to me," Dick went on, "after nurse had gone. He thought that perhaps you would, of your kindness, take him back under your coat before she comes back? You see, Robin says, if you got caught you wouldn't be whipped 'cos thou'rt too big, or it wouldn't hurt thee much?"

Uncle Ned puckered up his face. "I can see that I am to be made a tool of," he said. "So I am to help thee to break the law and take the consequences on my own broad back and hardened hide! Where is Robin who hath landed me in this complicated position? Packed safely away in the library with Mr. Stock, I suppose. You are a pretty pair of plotters, you two, and I always thought Robin was such a good boy!"

"He is," Dick said eagerly, "he never gets found out."

It was, no doubt, an entirely grateful rabbit, if rabbits can be grateful, whom Ned rescued from its unnatural surroundings and placed, as directed, under his coat. "I approve not at all of this," he remarked severely, "but I have been most disgracefully entrapped into wrong-doing, none of my own choice." He retreated, with the passive animal concealed under his coat.

"Bring Waggaboney next time I'm naughty," Dick shouted after his departing relative.

The occasion that led to Mr. Ned's emancipation is one that deserves to be recorded as showing on what slight happenings great events may turn.

One morning, a few days after Edward's return, there was a domestic sensation at Burnt Ely Hall. Mr. Coleman paced the terrace in even a greater state of perturbation than on the occasion of Miriam's misdemeanour. There Ned came across him, just before breakfast.

"What ever is the matter?" he asked.

His brother silently extended the chain, worn on his person, to which the key of his diary was usually attached. The key was missing!

"I've lost the key of my journal!" Mr. Robert Coleman declaimed.

"Oh, that's all right," Ned answered, "I found it last

night on the library floor. I quite meant to tell you. I'm sorry I forgot."

"Now, why could'st thou not have told me this?" Mr. Robert burst out. "This whole hour I've been hunting for it. Give it to me." He stretched out an eager hand.

"I haven't got it, I put it on the writing table next the book," Ned said cheerfully. "'Twill be there all right."

"What?" Mr. Robert Coleman shouted. "Thou placed the key next the book and left it! Thou feather-headed fool! All the household will have had access to my journal."

"Forgive me, Rob," Edward said, penitent at last. It was a fool's trick, I grant you."

"Fool's? They must be fools at Cambridge to serve out degrees to half-wits," Robert said scathingly. Ned attempted more apologies, but his brother had hastened into the house to reclaim the sesame to his inmost being. Ned followed in his wake. The library door stood open. Seated on the writing table, with his legs swinging, was the new serving-man from London, Tom Rich. Hannah, the comely serving-maid, sat on a chair indulging in violent fits of laughter from behind her apron, which she had flung over her head, thereby obstructing her view of the door. Tom Rich was engaged in reading aloud from the vellum-bound volume. He imitated the manner of the author of its contents to a nicety:—

"This day (he read) being Lord's Day I did go through the articles in my wardrobe. My new black breeches please me much in the cut thereof, and yet such as a godly man may wear without shame. Hannah did help me to relpace them——" the reader turned at this moment and beheld with consternation the author of the momentous entry standing glaring at them in the doorway. Mr. Ned retreated precipitately to conceal his impenitence, and so missed what actually ensued. He returned to the dining-room, where Elizabeth was waiting patiently for the men-kind at the laden breakfast table. She neither smiled nor wept at the story brought to her. "It was very saucy of Tom," she commented, while Ned worked off his unseemly

mirth. "Thy brother will be angered. Not that there were anything to be ashamed of in his book. He hath often read extracts to me on winter evenings."

The arrival on the scene of the outraged Robert put a stop to her mild commentary on the disaster.

Edward was profuse and abject in his apologies. Now that he had regained his equilibrium he realised that his brother had a just cause against him, and he was unsparing in his self-condemnation. Robert received it all with cold anger.

"All very fine when the thing's done," he said, "How soon wilt thou do the like again? I know not what they call thee at College, but all I know is that at home thou art a simpleton." He drew himself up, the sincerity of his indignation giving a certain weight to his utterance. Fixing the now fairly subdued misdemeanant with his dull eyes, Mr. Robert Coleman gave vent to prophecy.

"Mark me," he admonished, shaking his finger at his brother, "if thou goest on like this thou wilt bring both thy friends and thyself to the gallows!"

"Thou'rt generally right, Rob," Edward acquiesced, meekly. It was a disconcerting fact that the squire of Burnt Ely was generally right and Mr. Ned hopelessly out somewhere.

"What shall you do to Tom?" Elizabeth asked in her practical way.

Tom's employer thought.

"He'll surely have to go," he said.

"Be careful how thou turn'st him loose in the village," Edward said, "He might be telling the clowns in the tavern in what esteem thou dost hold thy Sunday breeches."

The Squire frowned gloomily at the demure-faced culprit whose remorse had been so short-lived. The frown, however, merely expressed concentrated thought.

"Thou art right," he said at last. "I must send him back to London."

"Suppose he refuseth to go?" Mrs. Coleman put in.

Robert thrust out his underlip and pursued his cogitations.

"I tell thee what," Edward said, "send me to London, and let Tom ride as my servant. Once there, I can abandon him safely with his due wage."

Mr. Robert appeared likely to entertain this idea. "Thou couldst go to thy cousin Roger Coleman," he said. "He is a vile sinner, I hear tell, but he was always given to hospitality, and he doth owe much to the Hall. I could give thee money enough to lie at an inn, if need be."

Ned's eyes sparkled. "The sooner I start the better," he suggested. "Tom hath a busy tongue and gossips much in the stables, and slips away ever and anon to Thorndon, to my Aunt Cullum's, to see the wenches in the dairy."

"The sooner thou goest the better," his brother replied, with a sudden access of nervous irritation. "If thou had hadst ordinary wits this would not have occurred. I wish thy cousin Coleman joy of thee!"

"They say his wife doth lead a mighty gay life," Elizabeth said, since that he became a gentleman-at-arms." There was a spice of envy in her voice. "All the king's gentlemen pensioners are prodigious wicked in their ways."

"She might fancy our Hannah for a serving wench," Mr. Coleman remarked, meditatively.

"Pack of nonsense!" Elizabeth retorted. "How could I do with Miriam, and why should we serve cousin Coleman's wife with handy maidens for her fine town house?"

Mr. Robert Coleman really hadn't a notion why, when it came to giving a reason. He glanced up rather sheepishly at his wife's face.

The diarist's wife, good soul, was entirely unperturbed.

So it was that young Edward Coleman got his way and rode out to see the world. He went, so to speak, under a cloud, accompanied by one also in disgrace. It was a most inglorious setting forth, though the children, indeed, gave him a great send-off.

"Thou hadst better talk in thy languages to thy cousin," Robert said, "and show him thy tutor's letter, or he may take thee for a fool."

His other send-off came from Miriam-alias-Arabella.

Pouncing on him in the corridor, at the moment of his

departure, she thrust a small packet into his hand, "It's for luck, Mr. Edward," she murmured, shamefacedly, "It'll keep you safe. Don't undo it, it's dreadful wicked, but it will bring you luck. My grandmother always wore it round her neck, tied up like that." They say charms is wicked, but do ye wear it, Mr. Ned?"

"I can't take thy luck, Miriam," Ned expostulated, but the girl could not be gainsaid. So Ned smiled and thrust the packet into his pocket intending to keep it safe until he might return it to its owner.

"Farewell, Edward," his brother said. "Remember to speak no ill of the king in London, and have naught to do with those who deny that they be Jesuits, for I am told that they tell lies for the sheer pleasure of it. Attend Sermon on Sunday without fail. Thy sister hath replaced the plume in thy hat in such fashion that thou canst remove it when expedient."

So Edward rode away. When he had gone a little way it occurred to him to examine Miriam's "luck." He unrolled the piece of cloth in which it was wrapped. In his hand there lay a small, much battered silver crucifix.

CHAPTER III

NED had to confess that he found the defaulting serving-man a far from dull companion. At first he tried to sit on his dignity, out of loyalty to his brother's wrongs, but with Tom Rich this was difficult. The serving-man was pink-cheeked, and cherub-faced. He had impudent blue eyes, rather too near together, and a smile of peculiar innocence. Tom was a thorough Londoner. A few weeks of Suffolk, into which he had retired, via Newmarket, had been more than enough for him, and he was very well pleased to ride into town along with Mr. Ned.

Ned learnt many things from Tom Rich in the course of their journey. First of all he learnt that the White Horse Tavern in the Strand was the most reliable house of refreshment in London. He also received the information that Mr. Rich's brother-in-law was landlord of a fashionable Inn near Whitehall, a hostelry which would, unfortunately, prove beyond Mr. Edward's means. All Mr. Rich's relatives appeared to be singularly well placed in society. His knowledge of London life was extensive. Edward was not surprised that the diversions legitimately obtainable at Burnt Ely had palled upon him.

They put up for the night at Colchester, and starting again next day, reached London towards evening. They rode through Stratford, over the marshes, dreary and unlovely, even in those days, crossed the river Lea by Queen Mathilda's Bridge, and passing the village of Bow, and the hamlet of Mile End, entered London through Aldgate.

Tom Rich showed Edward Coleman the Tower lying to their left as they approached the city gate. There was no end to his information concerning its inmates. He told Ned many quaint and curious things—how my Lord S——, a prisoner in the Beauchamp Tower, changed his linen three

times a day, and kept a barber on the premises ; and how a popish ranter had been entirely devoured by rats in the pit beneath the Devereux tower . . . he had an uncle head warder, he said, hence his intimate knowledge of the fortress.

Mr. Rich had many things to say, too, about the places they passed as they rode into the city. He possessed a knowledge of the names of such celebrities as frequented the various taverns that they passed, and was able to indicate the exact spot where Queen Henrietta Maria had dropped a garter, and given a sounding kiss to the gallant who restored it to her. Ned appreciated his guide's ingenuity to the full in after days when he became acquainted with the Queen-Mother.

They put up, at Mr. Rich's recommendation, at an inn near Lincoln's Inn Fields. This was a favourite residential quarter, albeit that a rabble of the worst kind frequented it from the adjacent Whetstone Park, the home of the Town Gallant, a dissolute street pest of the time. The fashionable "Blue Bells" Eating House stood in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Tom would fain have taken his master there, but Edward made bold to demur at the charges, not being entirely in his valet's hands.

Mr. Roger Coleman occupied a house in King Street, Covent Garden, close at hand. Our hero determined to present himself to his cousin next morning. Meanwhile he spent an amusing evening exploring the neighbourhood. The landlord, seeing that his guest was from the country, warned him of the dangers that lurked in the by-ways, on the strength of which warning Ned went forth joyfully and purchased for himself a fine new sword, an appendage which, so far, he had never possessed. Robert had been sufficiently generous with his young brother in the matter of funds, being anxious that he should uphold the honour of the Burnt Ely branch of the family to the London relatives. Edward had instructions to supplement his wardrobe, if necessary, and this he proceeded to do without delay, for the shops were not yet closed. In addition to his sword, he bought a pair of silken hose at a mercer's in

Cheapside, and, also, a pair of kidded gloves that were a joy to his soul. The sword gave him an air of distinction. He buckled it on there and then, and tried to walk as though it were not getting in between his long legs. The kidded gloves he kept for to-morrow's call. In Paul's Churchyard, after a short struggle with a congenital scruple, Mr. Edward Coleman bought himself a new plumed hat, and returned to his lodgings highly pleased with himself.

Next day he dressed himself with great seriousness. Tom Rich had asked leave to go off and visit his family in Bow Street, the Bond Street of that period. Ned would have valued his advice as to his turn-out, but he had no thought of detaining his "valet." He donned his best outdoor suit and assumed his shining sword. He felt a remarkably fine fellow, let it be admitted, especially when he had drawn on the kidded gloves. A subservient world lay at the feet of Mr. Edward Coleman in the vision that Ned beheld as he left his lodging. He strutted across the fields in so deplorable a state of swelled head—why should we deny it of our very human hero?—that he failed to notice where he was going, and knocked up against an aged person, who bade him "go to Tyburn!" and there undergo a certain unpleasant process. This, Ned found afterwards, was a common form of greeting in the Metropolis.

Our hero presented himself at the residence of Mr. Roger Coleman in a slightly chastened frame of mind. Mr. Coleman, he was informed, was out of town, at Tunbridge Wells with the Court, but Mrs. Coleman was within. Young Mr. Edward sent up his name, and waited in a peculiarly stuffy and unpleasant apartment—or so it seemed to the lad from the clean country, while the servant sought his mistress. The latter returned shortly and requested Ned to follow him. They mounted a dark, narrow staircase, Ned marvelling why a gentleman in his cousin's position should be so shabbily housed. He was ushered into a chamber at the top of the stairs, the principal feature of which was a large four-posted bed,

gaudily draped with crimson and yellow hangings. The bed clothes were carelessly thrown back, and a pillow, edged with exquisite lace, still retained the dent caused by the sleeper's head. In a chair in the centre of the room a lady sat dressed in an amazing garment, the species of which Edward was unable to determine. It was extremely elaborate, and also extremely negligent. The same might be said of the lady herself. Her hair fell in casual little curls about her face, which was small and piquant. Her complexion showed the aftermath of the paint-box, for Mrs. Roger Coleman was not yet dressed. Edward fell back three steps, greatly abashed, thinking that he had been ushered in by mistake.

The lady surveyed him with frank curiosity, and a merry twinkle in her eye.

"Dear boy!" she exclaimed, "don't be bashful. Come nearer and let me look at you. A new-comer is such a diversion." She flapped a white hand in Ned's direction. Our hero advanced and made his best bow over it.

"You dear creature!" the lady said, amusedly. "And do you come from that wilderness in Suffolk where they keep flocks and herds, and the Sabbath Day?" She looked him all over, as though he were there for that purpose, as she spoke.

Ned was distinctly embarrassed, and not a little piqued. "My home is at Burnt Ely," he said, "but I have been at Cambridge for three years. I have just taken my degree."

The lady was firesome. She didn't enquire what kind of a degree he had taken, but merely continued to contemplate him with twinkling eyes. "You're not a bad-looking boy, withal," she opined. 'Tis your brother who favours the ranters, isn't it? Don't tell me you're going to preach me a sermon! How you frightened me, saying that you come from Cambridge! They all preach there, don't they?—and sermons are only supportable in church, where one can ogle the pretty youths the whiles."

She fixed her merry eyes on the visitor with such extreme archness that he plunged into conversation to cover his confusion.

"I hear that my cousin Roger is away from town," he said.

"Yes, since these three weeks, for which the Lord be praised!" Mrs. Roger Coleman answered, piously. "Dear heart! don't look so shocked. I swear there's no scandal, but your cousin Roger is the most prodigious dull person to live with—how the king can stomach him I know not! He hath nick-named him 'S'please-y'r-Majesty' they tell me, for that is all Roger ever has to say to him. He has but one virtue, your cousin Roger, he knows a pretty woman when he sees one."

"That I can well believe," Ned said, smiling.

Mrs. Coleman looked quickly and approvingly at him. This quiet lad, in his absurd country clothes, had the makings of a gallant in him. His bright black eyes held possibilities. "Maybe Heaven has sent you to take care of me in his absence," she hazarded. "A male relative is a protection to a lone woman in these times. Will you take care of me, cousin Edward?" There was a subtle change in her tone, which became gentle and appealing. Her eyes, too, became soft and tender in expression.

The young man flushed. "I should be proud indeed," he murmured. It was an unexpected turn in the situation to find himself being thus treated as a man, and a possible knight-protector. The visitor's heart swelled within him.

"Will you take me to the play to-morrow night?" the lady said. "I have orders for a new play by Mr. Wycherley. My Lord Rochester has sent them. I would be passing grateful for your escort."

Ned's gallantry rose mightily to the occasion. His vanity also. It was a most gratifying thing to find himself placed in this dignified position of trust in his cousin's household. He could scarcely find words in which to express his delight, but the reader may take it that he did, for he left his cousin's house in a high state of satisfaction with himself, and Mrs. Coleman's maid found her mistress totally relieved from the grievous boredom of the morning. "Now run away," the lady had said to him, "and return

to-morrow at 5 o'clock. I will introduce you to my Lord Rochester. He will amuse you, but don't let him get too near your sweetheart, for he is a dangerous baby."

Ned's state of elation was not untinged with anxiety. He half wished that he had not granted Tom Rich leave of absence, as the latter's advice as to the etiquette observed when taking ladies to the play would have been invaluable. He, however, came across a remarkably affable and good-natured gentleman who was taking his mid-day meal at the Inn, who made friends with the country lad and proved a most useful and far more reliable guide than Mr. Rich. This genial personage was a Mr. Creed, a clerk in the Government, and he not only told Edward Coleman many things worth knowing, from the sight-seer's point of view, but offered to take him round and show him the various places of interest. Ned accepted the offer gratefully, and they spent the afternoon viewing the sights of the metropolis. Mr. Creed appeared to know everybody and everything. Ned could not have hit on a better companion. He was an agreeable conversationalist, and enjoyed imparting knowledge. Edward Coleman learned a number of things from Mr. Creed, some of which surprised him, and some which he found rather bewildering, but these latter were in the region of politics, of which subject Mr. Creed possessed an intimate knowledge from the inside.

"'Tis a pity that I did not meet you a few days sooner," Ned's genial companion remarked, as they walked through St. James' Park, watching the pageant of rank and fashion, "for I really could have shown you something mightily diverting. On what the papists call Maundy Thursday, there takes place the washing of the feet—a quaint popish ceremony—at the Queen's Chapel at Somerset House. 'Tis a most curious function. A dozen beggars get their feet washed, along with much fine ceremony. I have an acquaintance, a Catholic, who takes me in to see it. He would have taken you as well, had I known in time. There was also the Adoration of the Cross, another strange ceremony, and very idolatrous. Crowds went to hear

the great Capuchin preacher, although he preached in Portuguese."

"There was a mad Capuchin who used to preach in the streets at Cambridge," Ned said. "Ah," Mr. Creed said, "that would be old Brother Giles. He follows the king wherever he goes, whether it be Newmarket, Bath, or Tunbridge Wells. I saw him not a few days since preaching on the Moorfields, and now that the king has gone to The Wells, he will doubtless turn up there." Mr. Creed meandered on, but the other's thoughts had reverted to the scene at Cambridge, and the old madman's passionate words in praise of poverty.

Mr. Creed broke in on Edward Coleman's meditations. "D'you see the little bantam man yonder?" he said, pointing out a small, very correctly dressed young man, who was strolling along, bestowing observant glances on the passers-by, especially those of the fair sex. "That's Sam Pepys, a clerk in the Admiralty. His father is a tailor, and he sets as much importance on the cut of his vest as on the result of an engagement with the Dutch."

Edward regarded the cut of Mr. Pepys's vest, and became glumly sensible of the fact that his own clothes were not in the prevailing fashion. "The lady driving in the yellow coach," Mr. Creed went on, turning Edward's attention to the procession of gay vehicles, "is Miss Stuart. They say she is like to oust my Lady Castlemaine in the king's affections. My Lady has seen to it that she did not accompany the Court to Tunbridge Wells, but she appears to be faring merrily enough in town."

Ned surveyed the lady in question. She was an exquisite personage, with a high Roman nose. She wore a hat with an immense red plume, set on one side of her head. There was a gentleman in the coach with her whom Mr. Creed at once recognised and named. It astonished our hero how everybody seemed to be known to everyone else in the crowd of men and women, and how everybody's business was minded by such people as Mr. Creed, whom he rightly imagined to be a type of his class. The minute pieces of gossip, to which his companion treated him, began

to pall after a time. It was as small, or smaller, in its way than Burnt Ely. Ned marvelled at the childishness of it all. He had yet to learn how singularly lacking in the child-spirit was Restoration London.

Mr. Creed was full of lamentations at the absence of His Majesty. Had the King been in town they would have seen him feeding the ducks in the pond in St. James's Park. Failing that, Ned's guide proposed that they should go and have a look at the famous Tyburn Tree, or at the prisoners on view behind the bars at Newgate. "There was a man dragged to Tyburn this very morning," Mr. Creed said, "another thing you missed. Two passing interesting sights that would have cost you nothing—that, and the ceremony at the Queen's Chapel."

"I am to go to the play to-morrow night," Ned said, "and I've no great desire to see Tyburn, or Newgate either for that matter."

Mr. Creed thought: "Then we might stroll through Westminster Abbey," he said.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER their visit to the Abbey Mr. Creed very kindly invited Ned to return and dine with him in his house near by. He had taken a fancy to the bright lad, with his fresh mind, and his eagerness to imbibe the information that the other was more than ready to impart.

Mr. Creed's lodgings were in a street on the outskirts of Westminster. From the window of the upper room in which they had their meal Ned got a view of the marsh land stretching away to Chelsea. He saw the swampy Mill Bank, where, later on, a house of correction would stand, and later again, a great church, holding Heavenward in its uplifted hand a relic of the true Cross. Westminster Abbey lay behind them, and on one side the Gatehouse, a favourite place of imprisonment for Roman Catholic recusants.

After dinner Mr. Creed treated his guest to a concise and lucid exposition of the politics of the moment. Ned learnt many things from him. He learnt, for instance, that every politician was a person to be feared and mistrusted, since these were bound by the rules of their calling to smile on enemies and to sacrifice their best friends. Of all politicians, he learned, the most redoubtable, were the Jesuits, for these were the special friends of the Pope, the most dreaded of the European powers. The Jesuits stuck at nothing in accomplishing their end, they even defied the Papacy and made it their enemy! The Papacy would gladly have suppressed the Jesuits, Ned learned, and left English Catholicism in the hands of the old Catholic families whose faith was an innocuous tradition that interfered with no one. The listener felt himself becoming slightly confused, a fact which he set down to Mr. Creed's wine, and not to any flaw in his logic. The Jesuits, his

host went on to explain, were hated purely on account of their politics, and this hatred was so universal that street ballads were written to their detriment. He produced a specimen of one of these for Ned to see.

It was a profane and ribald rhyme making gross fun of the doctrines held most holy by the Catholic Church. The political schemes of the defamed Jesuit were only alluded to as means adopted to ensnare the country into the horrors of idolatry, the abominations of which were set forth in a stream of doggerel verse, and illustrated with painfully crude wood-cuts.

"It seems to put them in a greater choler that these Jesuits say the Mass than that they seek to put the king out of conceit with Parliament's war schemes," Ned ventured to remark, after reading the ballad. "Why do they continue to say Mass if it angers the nation? It must hamper their political ends?"

Mr. Creed stared at his guest. "Why, they'd die by inches on the rack or at Tyburn," he said, "before they'd give up saying Mass. If the whole lot were wiped out of existence for it they'd go on saying Mass."

"Then it's the Mass that matters to them, not the political gain?" Ned said.

Mr. Creed sighed. Hitherto he had found the boy intelligent.

"It is not easy to get a grasp of politics all at once," he said. "At Cambridge you are outside everything, and in devoting yourself to languages you have doubtless neglected to study logic and the things that exercise a man's reasoning faculties. You have no doubt been contented to subsist on a few prejudices, and hear-say statements." He then went on to regale the other with stories of the very vile lives led by certain Jesuits whom he named, and rounded off his discourse with a warning to the lad never to believe any defamation of the characters of the king's Protestant ministers of state, as it was a recognised thing among politicians to make personal charges against their antagonists with a view to weakening their political influence. This custom even obtained at Court among the

royal family themselves. His Majesty often feigned displeasure at the Duke of York's conduct, Mr. Creed told Ned in confidence, and credited to the latter's well-known want of tact some thought-out manœuvre of his own. "No one knows what His Majesty thinks," Mr. Creed said, "but everyone knows what his Grace of York thinks, and more besides ! He is that devoid of cunning that he can't make love but in so open and clumsy a way that the whole Court is convulsed. Now, with His Majesty no one knows where he cares, however much he makes love, nor what he believes, whether he favour Papist or Protestant. They say it of the Duke that from the time that he became well affected to Popery he has refused to use any oath on a Friday stronger than 'Ods fish !'"

"Is the Duke really a Papist ?" Ned asked, when he had done laughing.

Mr. Creed shook his head emphatically. "The moment he becomes a Papist he will say so," he said, in tones of supreme contempt.

Ned thought. "That seems to me right," he said, looking up at his host with his bright eyes.

"Then God grant that you will never become a politician, young sir," Mr. Creed said, "or you will most surely end your days at Tyburn."

Ned spent the early part of next day in exploring the city on his own account, which gave him a knowledge of a London very different from that to which Mr. Creed had introduced him. On a previous night an encounter with the street pest known as the "town gallant," an individual who added highway robbery to other vices, and a subsequent one, scarcely less unpleasant, with a drunken night-watchman had given him some idea of the seamy side of London life. The Town gallant he had left kicking in the gutter, a proficiency in the art of wrestling having stood him in better stead than the fine weapon at his side, the existence of which he did not even remember when set upon by the broad-shouldered bully. The night-watchman had been more difficult to deal with, for Ned had no desire to be "clapped up," and the representative of the Law had got a

firm conviction into his fuddled brain that our hero was a drunken and disorderly person.

Edward Coleman found himself in many strange purlieus during his wanderings, and beheld many sights that filled him with amazement and disgust, as well as many really delightful things, for London has always presented her contrasts to those who look for them, and in 1664 poverty had not learnt to be decently ashamed of herself, and to hide away in remote places as she does now-a-days. It took another century of the stocks and whipping-post to effect that.

Our hero had the evening's event greatly on his mind. He had surveyed his wardrobe ruefully, and under the advice of Mr. Tom Rich had decided on the purchase of a flowered silk vest. This noble garment he finally purchased at a tailor's in Holborn. The august personage displayed an open contempt for a ready-made customer, and supplied a garment more or less under protest. After this ordeal, Ned pursued his way along the Oxford Road till he found himself at Tyburn, and then returned to his lodgings to find that the noble vest was deplorably baggy in front.

At the hour named our hero presented himself at the shabby house in King Street. In the drawing-room, an apartment full of mirrors and gilt-backed chairs, he waited for his hostess. In one long mirror he anxiously scrutinized the figure of a tall, lanky youth, with a lean face, clad in a black velveteen suit, and a flowered silk waistcoat made to accommodate a pronouncedly convex corporation. Then suddenly, beyond the pale-faced youth he caught sight of a vision of beauty that fairly took his breath away, entering the open door behind him. Mrs. Roger Coleman dressed for the evening was a sufficiently ravishing apparition. Her eyes were bright and her lips red. Little clusters of curls shaded the former and softened their expression. She was exquisitely attired in satin of a soft shell-pink hue, and her bare shoulders were snowy white. Diamonds glittered on her neck and fingers, and her gown was embellished with a profusion of handsome lace. Edward Coleman, fresh from the provinces, and the monastic seclusion of the

Collegiate precincts, was almost rendered speechless by the thrilling novelty of the situation. He turned quickly and advanced to meet his hostess. He raised his bright black eyes to the smiling, admirably confected countenance, and blushed rosy red at the liberty he was taking.

Mrs. Roger was delighted. She greeted her young kinsman with all possible sweetness.

"Kind man!" she said, "to take pity on a lonely woman." She looked him over with gentle approval. "I like the look of my escort vastly," she murmured softly. "How thoughtful of the Fates to send me this nice new cousin."

The young man flushed with pleasure, and also with surprise. "I feared that I was hardly fit to be seen with you," he stammered, looking down apologetically at his dingy velvet. . .

"You're just beautiful!" his hostess said, clapping her hands. "Oh, we will have a merry evening, and you shall take me to the Blue Bells to supper afterwards, you sweet, sweet boy!" Her eyes twinkled and danced with merriment. As for Ned he had actually fallen to lamenting that he had not invested in a periwig.

As they sat in the coach together he wondered if he might decently tell his hostess how he had taken a fine high degree at Cambridge, and how he knew six modern languages in addition to the dead ones, and how he meant to make his way in the world and become a big personage, one worthy of escorting her about. Mrs. Coleman, however, showed no curiosity about her cavalier. She chatted away gaily about the people whom they were likely to see at the playhouse—my Lord this and that—and just before they reached their destination she produced a small black velvet mask from her pocket and fixed it over the upper part of her face. To be more correct, she got Ned to fix it for her, which he did with a beating heart and trembling fingers, feeling the clumsiest clown on all the earth. Poor Ned! The satin ribbon strings were monstrous difficult to tie.

The Duke of York's was the first playhouse that Ned

had ever entered. It was an ill-ventilated place, badly lighted with candles. A gaily dressed crowd moved about among the seats, greeting acquaintances, and chatting together. The manners of these good folk, were, to say the least of it, free and easy. The gentlemen evidently regarded the ladies as there to be scrutinized, and there was no attempt at disguising a stare, either of approbation or otherwise. The sense of humour of these gallants, too, was deplorably crude. One exquisite young man in silk pantaloons, who had been combing his curled periwig as he stood in the centre of the space in front of the stage, suddenly sat himself down on the lap of a lady, which he was supposed to have mistaken for a seat. The lady gave a scream of such shrillness that Ned sprang to his feet. He waited to see the lady's companion draw his sword, a jewelled one, and avenge the insult, but the latter merely entered into the joke with a falsetto imitation of the lady's scream.

"Won't they throw him out?" Ned asked, in tones of horror, and three very tawdry young ladies who were selling oranges to the assembly, overhearing the remark, went off into shrieks of laughter that passed entirely unreprieved. Mrs. Roger laughed with them. "You funny child!" she gasped, when she had recovered herself, "Why, that's my Lord of Rochester. He always teazes the maids of honour. He's a torment of a man. They all adore him." To Ned's unspeakable embarrassment she beckoned to the person in question. He came up smiling guilelessly. He was a baby-faced youth with full lips and large blue eyes.

"My Cousin, Mr. Edward Coleman from Burnt Ely in Suffolk, disapproves sorely of your conduct," Mrs. Roger said, thus introducing her discomfited companion. My Lord Rochester surveyed Edward with the utmost interest. "Has he been to see the strange collection of zoological curiosities in St. James' Park?" he enquired. "You must take him and show him to them—I mean show them to him."

"I am showing him the bear-pit," Mrs. Roger retorted

smartly. My Lord of Rochester grinned. "I trust that you will not mistake this for a play-house, Sir," he said, addressing Ned, "Possibly you might do so, coming from Burnt Ely"—he laid an insolent stress on the last words—"And possibly you might mistake Mr. Wycherley for a playwright, whereas he is in truth a crossing-sweeper in Alsatia. I trust you will enjoy the play. It is written especially for the maids of honour. Perhaps, though," addressing Mrs. Coleman, "your cousin may not consider that they are, coming from Burnt Ely?"

Ned contracted a violent loathing for My Lord Rochester on the spot. There were several ladies and gentlemen listening, and a loud burst of laughter greeted this remark.

"My cousin is here to protect me, in my husband's absence," Mrs. Roger said severely. "Look to your behaviour, sirs!" whereat the cluster of gallant gentlemen, led by his lordship, scuttled back to their seats like rabbits, with an exaggerated haste that vastly amused the orange-girls, one of whom got knocked entirely off her feet in the process.

Mrs. Roger Coleman lay back in her seat and laughed consumedly.

The play proved to be a fair specimen of the work of the most depraved playwright of the Restoration period. Edward sat listening with increasing horror and disgust. His cheeks tingled. He daren't glance at his companion. He felt somehow responsible for having brought her, ignorant though he had been of what was in store. He soon became aware, however, that his companion was not being affected in the way that he was. On the contrary, she gave vent to continued and unrestrained laughter at the very things that made the young man from Burnt Ely hot at the mere recollection of them for weeks afterwards.

At the end of the first act Rochester joined them. He looked slyly at Ned. "'Tis a dull play," he said, "but we have been sufficiently diverted by watching your cousin. We opine that he does not approve of Mr. Wycherley, or else that the oranges that he has been treated to do not

agree with his inside." The gibe was evident, it being the custom for the gentlemen to treat the ladies to those delicacies.

Things did not improve in the succeeding acts. Ned had become conscious that he was being watched with interest by his hostess's friends, and that his inability to enjoy or even to pretend to enjoy—let it be said to his credit—the intolerable jests was a source of keen amusement to the blasé play-goers, whom even Mr. Wycherley's latest could only bore to distraction.

"Fifty thousand thanks, for our evening's diversion," My Lord Rochester said to Mrs. Roger, coming up to her after the play was over.

"We are going to sup at the Blue Bells," Mrs. Roger said. "A dull play always makes me hungered and as dry as a bone."

A number of the company made their way to the Eating-House, which was a favourite resort for play-goers. They formed themselves into one party, ordering a variety of dishes and a liberal quantity of wine. Ned never found out to whom he was beholden for that remarkable orgy. Mrs. Roger chose and ordered such dishes as took her fancy, and Ned had yet another bad quarter of an hour wondering to what extent he would be expected to settle with mine host. He would have given much for the presence of the helpful Mr. Creed.

The company waxed very merry as the feast proceeded. Their conversation was no great improvement on the play, but after Ned had taken a glass and a half of sparkling wine he found himself becoming more tolerant of his surroundings. When he had finished the second glass he was actually taking part in the conversation and contributing to the entertainment, to his own intense astonishment. Ned had always been in request as an entertaining companion at College. He possessed quite a pretty wit, and when the sparkling nectar had made him forget his shyness he blossomed forth into a sufficiently amusing talker. Mrs. Coleman's guests having discovered that the young man from Burnt Ely was devoid neither of wit nor humour, were

ready enough, to do them justice, to give him his full chance, and to encourage his share in the conversation.

The consciousness that he was making a success of himself after all, was as intoxicating to our hero, as the wine, which, from shyness, he did not dare refuse. It did not take much at this stage to upset the young man's mental balance. He began to tell himself that he had been an odious prig in passing a hasty judgment on these genial and good-natured folk. He also found himself snatching a fearful joy from the thought that he was doing something that he had never done before, and I regret to say became enamoured of a new, unfamiliar, and highly improper Edward Coleman, who was a bit of a rake, but a vastly amusing rascal withal.

The orgy continued to quite a late hour. At last Mrs Roger made the demure comment that she must be getting home betimes in the absence of her lord, or my Lord Rochester would be writing a libel on her. She waited, however, till the others had dispersed on their various ways, then she turned to Edward, who was left standing with her outside the Tavern, waiting for her coach to appear.

"Kiss me good-night, Cousin Ned," she whispered.

Edward did so—on the cheek, and stood beside her trembling with a new intoxication.

The coach drove up. Mrs. Roger Coleman stepped in. She sat herself down on the seat and made room beside her. She leant towards him, and her eyes melted into a tenderness that was full of pathos and pleading. She fixed them on the bright-eyed lad who stood there taking his last look at her, and doing silent homage to her charm.

"Come home with me, Edward," she said. "The lonely woman wants you."

She waited, watching the lad on the pavement. Then she dropped her handkerchief. He stooped and picked it up, inhaling the perfume. At that moment something slipped out of his pocket and fell with a metallic ring on to the cobbles. He made a hasty snatch at it. Mrs. Roger Coleman marked it quickly, and his hasty action.

"What is it?" she asked sharply, "your lady's love-token?"

Ned broke into a wild laugh. His cheeks were flushed—he was feeling as though all the blood in his veins were a motive power lifting him into space. It was so ridiculous, the picture that was suddenly brought to his mind at this moment—so incongruous!

Mrs. Roger interpreted his strange manner according to her wisdom. She looked at him narrowly for a moment. Then the melting expression in her eyes deliberately changed to a shrewd, and not unkindly twinkle. "Run home to bed, little boy," she said, "run home to bed and dream of angels."

She tapped the glass in front of the coach peremptorily, and it started off, leaving Ned standing gazing after the departing wheels, and holding in his hand the "love-token"—Poor Arabella-Miriam's luck—"the little silver crucifix that keeps a man from harm."

CHAPTER V

NED woke up next morning with a headache that was an entirely new experience. He lay on his back in bed and surveyed the dissipated young man of last night. It was a distinct downfall to his pride. He had become aware of the existence of a potential Edward Coleman of whom he had previously had no suspicion. He had ridden out to set the world to rights, and the world had laughed, taken him by the hand, and led him into her wry way, with a chuckle, as it were. A bold preacher has said that it is a good thing for a man to get intoxicated once in his life to preserve him from a certain spiritual vice, and it is more than possible that his evening in London saved Ned from becoming a prig in after life. He recognised, as he lay there reviewing the events of the previous night, that his virtue was purely a matter of luck. Robert had been right, as usual, in summing him up. There is nothing more hateful than the discovery that other people—especially certain other people—know us better than we know ourselves. It was in a very pessimistic mood that Edward Coleman commenced his third day in London. He discovered that he had taken a violent dislike to the gay city. He would get away from it as soon as he could. His cousin, who was to put him in the way of things, was at Tunbridge Wells, or rather at Groombridge House in its neighbourhood, where he was the guest of a Mr. Packer, so Mrs. Coleman had told him. Ned determined, there and then, to ride out into Sussex and call on his cousin at Mr. Packer's, and afterwards to go on to Tunbridge Wells and get a sight of his sovereign.

Tom Rich was obviously disappointed at being moved on from the city of his birth and predilection. The present arrangement suited him admirably. He en-

deavoured to entice his master to linger in town by dropping hints of the amusements that were being abandoned. Ned, however, had no desire to see the women flogged at Bridewell, nor to visit the *Folly*, an accurately named vessel, moored in the Thames, off Somerset House, where the gayest of the gay disported itself in revels that were unmatched at Whitehall itself. After he had called at the house in King Street, an act of politeness which he felt it incumbent upon him to perform, he arranged to resume his journey.

It was, on the whole, a relief to Ned that his cousin's wife was not receiving visitors that morning. He returned to the Inn, settled his score, and set out southward, shaking the dust of the wicked city off his buckled shoe.

They crossed London Bridge, that famous gateway to many a mighty adventure. But then, Ned was riding the wrong way. Enterprising spirits ride over London Bridge with their face turned northward. He had his back to the wealth of England, and yet he had ridden out to see the world, and (for this must be an open secret by now) to conquer it. The bells of Bow made no attempt to call him back. The Surrey hills rose before him dimly in the mist, for it was a miserable day, the rain falling in a thin drizzle. Mr. Tom Rich was silent and sulky. Ned could get no entertainment out of him, nor had he the wish to, for he was suffering from acute depression. The sight of the Surrey landscape gave him but little cheer, gorgeous as it appeared to his eyes, accustomed only to the flat fenlands, even when partly veiled in the mist. Ned, being out of conceit with himself, was also out of conceit with Nature, but on the morrow she would assert her power over the moods of the human mind—even the mood of a young man who took himself very seriously.

It was evening when they entered Sussex and looked down on the dense woodlands stretching away south towards the downs, beyond which lay the sea. Edward decided to put up for the night at a hostelry which they came upon within a few miles of Groombridge, for the horses showed signs of flagging. Here they found ex-

cellent accommodation, and a merry enough company. The conversation turned chiefly on the Horse Fair at Tunbridge which was to take place on the morrow, Tunbridge Wells, with its Court gossip, falling into the background, for the moment. Ned would have liked to hear more about the king. All he did hear, however, was that the merry monarch was frequently to be met in the woods near the Wells with my Lady Castlemaine. It seemed an impossibility to mention Charles without bringing in the name of some fair dame of doubtful repute, or rather, undoubted disrepute. Ned retired to bed early in a state of profound depression.

Very early next morning Mr. Tom Rich sought the ostler with the information that his master was leaving betimes. He had, in fact, gone on already to the top of the hill to collect botanical specimens, Mr. Rich explained, with his ingenuous smile, and he was to take the horses along and pick him up. The horses were duly saddled and brought out, and Mr. Rich rode quietly away, leading Ned's mount and the pack-horse.

A couple of hours later Ned woke up, and in due course presented himself to the astonished ostler, who was still rejoicing over the handsome gratuity that Mr. Rich had offered him in his master's name.

"But you be gone hours since!" the man assured Ned. The latter denied the soft but obviously inaccurate impeachment. "But your man rode off with the horses and baggage!" the ostler repeated. "He said you be gone on up the hill to dig roots."

Gradually the nature of the trick, of which he had been the victim, dawned on Ned. The sheer audacity of it fairly staggered him. Tom, no doubt, intended to dispose of the two horses at the fair at Tunbridge, and then ride back to London, and obliterate himself in his native purlieus.

The landlord was duly concerned, but, to add to the irony of Ned's plight, that worthy man, put on his guard by the ingenious mendacity of the serving-man, was by no means beyond suspecting that Ned's request for the loan

of a mount, on which to go in pursuit of the culprit, was not a ruse which was part of an even deeper conspiracy. Ned might, after all, be in league with the other. Boniface scratched his head and looked askance at his guest, albeit that Ned paid his reckoning duly, his money being fortunately intact, although his every other possession had been carried off by the rascally Tom. The landlord feared that he had no available beast to hire out to the luckless dupe, so but one thing remained for Ned—to go on foot to Groombridge, and ask his cousin's assistance. Then yet another complication arose. Ned's letters of introduction, and various papers of identity, had been stowed away in the pocket in his saddle. He had never met his cousin Roger, or at anyrate, not since his infancy. That astute gentleman might be disinclined to accept his word. He might suspect him of being one of those popish plotters of whom Mr. Creed had spoken, impersonating the talented young Mr. Edward Coleman for their own ends. For a moment he felt that his very personality had been filched by the relentless Tom Rich. It was a most undignified position, and yet, instead of his depression of yesterday being increased, Ned actually felt his spirits rising in a most amazing way. Tom's audacity had its comic side, and Ned felt that Nemesis had overtaken him for laughing when his brother was victimised by the same egregious person.

The morning was glorious. The undulating woodlands, towards which the road stretched, were bathed in soft sunshine. It was late April, and the garment of God, spread out over hill and valley, was embroidered with marvellous delicacy. Ned had never seen anything so beautiful as this young spring morning in Sussex. He forgot his misfortunes in the joy of it, or rather, to be more accurate, his misfortunes appeared to be actively responsible for the lightness of heart that he was conscious of. It was preposterous that a man who had just been robbed of all his belongings—his very identity even—should be feeling so wildly light-hearted, yet, as he started off down the high road, that led to the wood, through which the path to

Groombridge lay, a sense of freedom took hold of him, a strange, wonderful, entirely new feeling of belonging to himself. Here he was free to go where he chose, to do, aye, to be, what he chose. Tom Rich and the baggage had been an encumbrance. To be on foot, free to traverse the enchanted forest, and explore whither he would was a glorious improvement on riding along the King's highway.

He felt strongly tempted to relinquish the pursuit of the thief and go on this new way in quest of adventures that can never befall a man who is attended by a serving-man and impedimenta.

A song, that he had heard the mad friar sing in the meadows outside Cambridge, came into his head, and he found himself singing it as he entered the wood :—

“Poverty's a hardy maid,
With no care her mind is weighed ;
No lurking thief makes her afraid
For never a-pluck has she !”

and another :—

“France and England are my dower,
Between the seas I wield great power,
Yet no cruel wars me devour.
Mine is all the Saxon land—
Mine is all the Gascon land :
Burgundy I hold in my hand,
And all of Normandy.”

At that moment of his life Edward Coleman was within an ace of entering into great possessions.

It almost seemed as though the wood had cast a spell over the young man. He dived into the thicket, oblivious of the fact that he might thus miss his path and lose time. Even faerie glades are not usually haunted on a fresh spring morning, yet Ned became conscious of an eerie feeling as he plunged into the thickness of the wood. Surely the wood *was* haunted, for, suddenly, from the distance came an echo of the very song that he had been

carolling in the lightness of his heart. Ned hardly knew how to believe his ears, or his eyes! for, at that moment, as he stood rapt in attention, listening to the quavering accents which were yet sweet and thrilling, something rushed out from the thicket and sprang up at him.

It was the brown dog, Jacopone.

There was no mistaking Jacopone. It was certainly the ungracious mongrel, who had disappeared from Burnt Ely on the day following Ned's arrival. He greeted our hero boisterously, and then turned and ran off again to introduce a queer brown figure which had suddenly loomed in sight. It was the mad friar. Then Ned remembered that his London acquaintance had told him how the old man would probably be appearing in the neighbourhood of Tunbridge Wells. The mystery was explained.

The friar approached Ned and greeted him quite naturally, with no signs of surprise. He smiled a bright smile.

"Ah," he said, gaily, "God bless thee, little Brother Ned!"

Edward Coleman was mightily amused at the quaint greeting. His stature was not such as to justify the diminutive.

"So Jacopone has returned to you," he said. "I took him to my home, but he liked it not, and ran away."

"'Tis a faithful beast," the friar said, "but Jacopone is in sore disgrace. He has been cruel to a brown brother." He opened the front of his ragged habit and displayed to Ned's eyes a long brown snake curled up on his bosom.

"But it will sting you," Ned cried, in alarm, recognising a venomous species of adder.

"Nay," the old man said, gently, stroking the creature's scaly back, "they never hurt me, nor do they ever hurt with malice, 'tis man's tongue that hath venom in it. Jacopone hath not meant to hurt his brown brother either, but he hath frightened it, snapping at its tail in play. If you could take him a little way off, and hold his attention, I would let this little brother get away." Ned, be it confessed, would much rather have seen Jacopone disport with his brown playmate, but he did as the old man requested

and enticed the mongrel to a little distance while the friar very tenderly placed the adder on the ground. It disappeared quickly enough with a hiss—of gratitude, it may be hoped in spite of the stigma on the snake's nature.

"The other day," the old man said, looking sadly at Jacopone, "he killed brother fox. He caught him in a furze bush. Jacopone is not a true child of Francis." He shook his head at the animal, who lowered his head, set his tail between his legs with penitent mien, and, approaching his master, lifted a large brown paw, and laid it in the hand extended to him. "Thus he sayeth his *confiteor*," the old man said, smiling.

"I absolve thee, Jacopone, in the name of God who taught thee not to know better. 'Tis man that must needs do penance."

"He had scant opinion of my hospitality," Ned said. "Time after time he left me while I had charge of him, returning after many days, the shadow of himself." "Ah, but he was searching for me," his master explained. "He found me the very day that I left jail. They kept me there three months. 'Twas a joyous time—the gift of song cometh to one in prison more even than in the woods. Thou hast heard what the blessed Jacopone sung in jail :—

"Dolce amor povertude,
Quanto ti degliamo amare !
Povertude poverella,
Umiltude é tua sorella ;
Ben ti Casta la scodella,
E al Veve e al mangiare !"

He chanted the ditty in a curious monotone, Jacopone the second listening to his name-sake's effusion with his head on one side, smiling as a dog most certainly knows how to smile.

Ned was so fascinated by watching the quaint figure that he could scarcely listen to the words, although the Italian was perfectly intelligible to him. It gave him a wild feeling of exhilaration.

"I am a wayfarer, too," he said. "I am out seeking adventures."

"Thou art travelling on foot," the old man observed, surveying him. "That is well. My Lady Poverty travels not with a train of horses. And I see that thou hast no pack?"

Edward laughed. "I am out by myself," he said. "My horses have left me, and I have lost my pack."

The old man looked up at him with his swift, sweet smile.

"Then thou art happy," he said. "The man who bears his own pack will find it as thistle-down, but he who hath no pack walketh on the air!"

Ned began at this stage to have an uncomfortable feeling that his assumption of destitution was a misrepresentation of the case. It never occurred to him that the simple old man was a legitimate subject for fooling.

"But I have money to buy a pack," he said, and unfastening his well-filled wallet from his belt he held it out to the old man with a smile.

The friar surveyed the purse in much the same way as Ned had done the adder. A look of horror overspread his furrowed countenance, and a wild look entered the gentle blue eyes. The next moment he had made a snatch at it, wrested it from its owner and flung it far into the undergrowth, in a dark recess of the thicket which could only be reached by aid of an axe.

Ned stood petrified. This was a form of highway robbery for which he certainly had not been prepared.

The old friar was delighted. He beamed benevolently on his victim.

"Now," he said, "thou art a true son of Francis, since that I have rid thee of thy dross. Come thou along with me and Jacopone."

He prepared to lead the way, his old face full of boyish eagerness.

"Now thou art out on the holy adventure, little brother Ned."

It is to be feared that Ned used some bad language

inwardly. Outwardly there was nothing to be done, the culprit was as irresponsible as a baby. It was clear that he could not reach the spot for it was in a dense part of the wood, and it would be impossible to locate it again.

"Go," said Ned, in despair, "and find somebody and tell them that there is someone in the wood who hath need of a man with an axe. I must needs have my purse back. By what right do you rob men thus?"

The old man sighed. "'Tis ever so," he said. "Men cannot turn themselves from their dross."

"It was my dross, not yours, anyway," Ned retorted, grimly, but his ethics were lost on the old Franciscan who had become a little child. The latter called his dog, "Farewell, brother Ned," he said, gently, and slowly went on his way, leaving the worldly young man to keep a solitary vigil, tantalus-like, by his confiscated wealth.

CHAPTER VI

IT seemed likely that Ned might fulfil his own prophecy and remain in the wood many days before someone came to his assistance. By the middle of the afternoon—it had been about noontide when he entered the wood—he had grown desperate, and had fully determined to embrace the state of poverty forced upon him by the holy friar, when the long-awaited for sound of human voices broke upon his ear. Ned set up a shrill coo-ee. The next moment a brown figure loomed in sight. For a second he thought it was the friar come back, and it is doubtful if the holy man's cloth would have saved him from very severe treatment at his victim's hands, had that been the case, but a second glance showed that the figure was that of a woman. She was leading a little girl by the hand, and as she approached Ned the latter was somewhat embarrassed to discover that he had coo-ed to a very young and very beautiful lady. The brown hooded cloak fell in graceful folds about the tall, elegant figure of the wearer. A very sweet girlish face looked out from the hood. Ned was not at all sure that the whole thing was not the normal result of half a day spent in this place of spells, and that he was not looking on a vision.

"Were you not calling to us?" the young lady asked, in perfectly matter-of-fact tones. Ned made a hundred apologies and hastened to explain his predicament—how a mad fellow whom he had come across had snatched his purse and thrown it into the thicket. What he wanted was to find a woodman or forester who would bring an axe and cut away the obstructing undergrowth.

The lady listened to his story with a gravity that was evidently assumed with difficulty. "That must have been our Brother Giles," she said. "It's the very thing he

would do. He hates money. But how hungry and tired and cross you must be, waiting here all those hours. I wonder you didn't hear the childrens' voices, they usually play in the woods. We live quite near here, at Wildwood. Had you not better come back with me at once and have something to eat and rest? Phyllis will remember the place where your purse is if you show her, she knows every inch of the wood, don't you, Phyllis?" The child at her side nodded. She was regarding Ned, with undisguised interest, with the painfully observant eyes of childhood. "Now," the lady went on, "you must run home and tell the mother that I am bringing a visitor back."

The child darted off, eager to bear the exciting news. There was generally something exciting connected with the visitors who came to Wildwood.

"Wildwood stands just outside the forest," the girl told Ned. "It belongs to my aunt, Mistress Tyrwhit, you have heard of her, no doubt, if you have been stopping in the neighbourhood." She said this last with a little half-smile, peeping at him sideways with some curiosity, and Ned set to wondering what he would have heard about Mistress Tyrwhit if he had met with the opportunity suggested. I am sorry to say that his mind ran on court scandals, and he prepared himself for a provincial edition of his cousin-by-marriage.

Whatever the aunt might be, the niece was perfectly charming.

He made great friends with Margaret Tyrwhit, told her all about himself, and forgave the friar, wholly and unconditionally, as they walked together towards Wildwood.

A very few minutes' walk brought them to the end of the wood. They emerged into the open, and Ned saw in front of him, looking on to the forest, from what was little more than a clearing, a long, low, red house, many-gabled and rambling. Trees formed the background, yet it looked cheerful enough, bathed in the warm light of the afternoon sun. Wildwood, though well named, was certainly not a dreary habitation. As they drew near, a lady came out from the wide porch and stood on the

terrace waiting for them. She was plainly garbed, and her hair was dressed in the simplest fashion. She stood watching them approach with grave eyes. Ned's guide quickened her pace. "Mother is expecting us," she said.

The lady came forward to meet Edward, and greeted him with simple, unaffected courtesy.

"Phyllis has told us about your misadventure," she said, "and we are feeling very guilty—we feel ourselves entirely responsible, for Brother Giles is our guest." She said it with the utmost gravity. Ned felt that it was his turn to keep back a smile. The idea of the unwashed old vagabond being the guest of this very queenly lady was so exceedingly amusing. "He always accepts our hospitality when he is in the neighbourhood," the lady went on, "and we hope that you will do the same, for the time being, while the men get at your purse for you. Phyllis tells me that Brother Giles has thrown it away somewhere where you cannot get at it." She was still perfectly serious. Ned began to stand rather in awe of her. "You will like to wash," she went on, "before you take anything to eat. William will take care of you"—she gave a glance round, and William promptly appeared on the scene, somewhat in the fashion of the genie when the lamp is rubbed.

He was a tall merry-looking youth about Ned's own age, dressed in garments, the cut of which would have fully satisfied Mr. Pepys himself.

"Take care of Mr. Coleman, Will," the lady said, "and bring him to the oak parlour. He must be nearly famished."

A few minutes later Ned found himself in the oak parlour, feeling decidedly less dusty and travel-stained. A toothsome meal of various meats were set out ready for him on the stout oak table, and a ponderous armchair drawn up. Mistress Tyrwhit followed Ned into the room carrying a tray containing wine and drinking vessels with her own hands. "They had forgotten this," she remarked, setting it down on the table before Ned could take it from her. "Will Throckmorton will see that you do credit to your appetite. I shall regard it as discourtesy on your

part, Mr. Coleman, if I find anything left on the table." She smiled a swift, sudden smile, and Ned sat himself down obediently in the big chair, with a feeling that the suggested task must be accomplished somehow, or that he must perish in the attempt.

"Where is Mr. Ironmonger?" Mistress Tyrwhit next enquired of William. "I thought that perhaps he might come and entertain Mr. Coleman whilst you took John, with Phyllis to show the way, to retrieve the lost property."

The lady having indicated a desire for Mr. Ironmonger, sure enough the door opened, and a tall thin man, with a very pleasant, humorous countenance appeared. "I've been annoying the children," this personage remarked, "and Margaret has ordered me away. She says if I will play in my fashion I must do it with grown-up people, it's not so pernicious." He checked himself, catching sight of Ned.

"This is Mr. Coleman," Mistress Tyrwhit said. "You are to amuse him and see that he takes a good meal while I go to the refectory. Will is going to look for some property of his that Brother Giles has been hiding away in the woods."

Will Throckmorton disappeared as the lady said this. She followed him out of the room, having first filled Ned's glass with red wine from the flagon with her own hands. A robin, who had entered the window, perched on the table, and prepared to keep the guest in countenance.

Mr. Ironmonger sat himself down on the arm of a chair, and swung one leg to and fro. He surveyed Ned with a merry eye. "You'll have to eat," he remarked, shaking his head. "The Mother has given orders. Her orders are as the laws of the Medes and Persians."

"Why is Mistress Tyrwhit called 'The Mother'?" Ned ventured to ask.

"There are a dozen or so children in this establishment," Mr. Ironmonger replied, "who will tell you why. We had to find a handy name for them to call her by, so we chose 'The Mother'."

Ned had been endeavouring to make up his mind what sort of household this was that he had dropped into. He

had heard the sound of childrens' voices laughing and shouting at play. Mistress Tyrwhit, he imagined, possessed a number of nephews and nieces younger than Margaret. His hostess, he concluded, was probably one of the Quaker sect. She suggested those peculiarly attractive people in some vague way. The becoming simplicity of her dress, and a certain gravity of manner, punctuated by a flash of dry humour, had nothing of the sour puritan about it. Ned made up his mind that his hostess was a Quakeress.

He found Mr. Ironmonger remarkably amusing, and his proxy host certainly found him not less so. Ned told him the story of his first misfortune, the loss of his horses and baggage. It was quite disedifying to see how tickled the latter was by the impudence of the thief. He was serious, however, in good time, and eminently practical. "You and I will ride to Tunbridge," he said, "and see if we can trace the miscreant. It is possible that he may have aroused suspicion and got clapped into jail."

"Fate has made a fool of me ever since I started," Ned said, ruefully, and then he found himself telling the other all about himself. The facetious Mr. Ironmonger had suddenly changed into a serious and most "understanding" listener. He eyed the lad with much kindness and sympathy.

"Of course you will stay here the night," he said, "The Mother, is well accustomed to visitors." Ned wondered what his position in the household might be. It was quite the quecrest household that he had ever come across.

"May I ask if you live here?" he enquired. He was longing to ask all sorts of questions.

"I come and go," Mr. Ironmonger said. "The trade I follow keeps me moving about the country. I do commerce in all the counties."

When Ned had finished his repast, to which he did full justice, Mr. Ironmonger took him to the terrace in the front of the house where the ladies were sitting, enjoying the early evening hour.

"May I fetch a child to teaze?" Mr. Ironmonger asked

of the lady of the house. "Where is Phyllis, by example?"

"He is a very frivolous person," Mrs. Tyrwhit said to Ned. "You will find John Mitton a much more sober companion, although he is not half Mr. Ironmonger's age."

John Mitten was a somewhat heavy youth who appeared to be a chronic member of the Wildwood household.

"I fear that they must be having a lot of trouble getting at my purse," Ned said.

"Suppose we go and see how they are faring?" Mr. Ironmonger suggested. They were about to do so when Phyllis rushed in, flushed and delighted. "They won't be able to get it to-night," she announced. "Robin says he must wait till to-morrow and get a woodman."

"Hurray!" Mr. Ironmonger said. "Mr. Coleman will have to be our guest."

"Mr. Coleman would have honoured us in any case, I hope," Mistress Tyrwhit said. "I have been preparing his bed-chamber. I hope that he will not find us very dull company compared with Groombridge House; it was terribly naughty of Brother Giles to put him to this inconvenience."

It was impossible even to demur at accepting the hospitality thus proffered.

Ned thanked his hostess, and sat himself down, feeling that the whole thing was as natural as possible. He was soon joining in the chat, and feeling more absolutely at home than he had ever done in his life.

"How came Brother Giles to get hold of your purse?" Mistress Tyrwhit asked. "I suppose you were giving him alms?"

Ned laughed. "It was not quite so bad as that," he said. "I must confess that I brought it on myself, in a way. I told him that I had neither pack nor horses (his hostess had heard his story from Margaret, but as yet she had made no comment on it) and he took me for a stray follower of the Holy Lady Poverty, so I had perforce to undeceive him."

The Mother fixed her earnest eyes on him with a new

interest. "Are you a disciple of St. Francis?" she asked. "So few people now-a-days have even heard of Holy Poverty."

Ned shook his head. "When I was at College I read some Italian poetry," he said, "by a fanatic called Jacopone da Todi. And the friar reminded me of him; moreover he was always singing these strange songs. He bewitched me with his singing of them. He was always so wonderfully happy."

The lady glanced across at Margaret with shining eyes. She looked at Ned thoughtfully for some seconds without speaking. "How strange that you should have fallen among us," she said at last. "We are all devotees of the mad Jacopone here—we even tolerate the friar's dog on account of his namesake!"

"I know the dog very well," Ned laughed. "I had the guardianship of him while the old fellow was in jail. He deteriorated into 'Waggaboney,' and finally ran back to his master."

"Then you know Brother Giles?" Mr. Ironmonger said. "And he has added ingratitude to his mortal sin of larceny."

"No doubt he believed that he was doing me a service," Ned answered, "and, 'pon my word, I verily believe he was"—he smiled boldly at his hostess. This place was so marvellous pleasant, he could but forget that he was a stranger.

At this moment Will Throckmorton joined the group on the terrace.

He went up to Mistress Tyrwhit.

"Gaffer Gratten's son is here," he said hurriedly, "and he says the old man is taken for death." He looked across at Mr. Ironmonger.

The latter rose from his seat with alertness.

"Is Robin getting the horse?" Mistress Tyrwhit asked. "Brown Bob is the freshest." She looked questioningly at Mr. Ironmonger. He nodded, and a look of anxiety left her grave face.

The two men hastened off in the wake of the lady, who

led the way. Margaret sat still and chatted to Ned. A few minutes later they heard the tramp of horses' feet. Margaret looked up quickly, and then lowered her head and kept it bent for a moment.

In the distance Ned saw the figure of Mr. Ironmonger riding swiftly away.

"He must be a physician," Ned thought, "but it was passing queer to call it a trade, and speak of 'doing commerce.'"

Ned had yet to learn of the physician of souls, and the divine commerce that bartereth much that the world holds dear for a pearl of great price.

CHAPTER VII

NED wondered how long this *tete à tete* would last. He was enjoying himself intensely. Madge was the most unaffected and delightful of companions, and a remarkably attractive picture to sit and look upon, with her sweet face framed in the bright, fair hair, and her dainty brown frock that harmonised so well with the woodland setting. He told her all about himself—his home and college life, as young men will when they find a sympathetic listener of the other sex, and Madge was gloriously sympathetic. They laughed unitedly over the misdemeanours of Tom Rich, and the story of the diary, and Ned's fortuitous emancipation. In a very few minutes, however, or so it seemed to Ned, Madge jumped up.

"I must go and help with the children," she said. "Had you not better go into the library and find a book? You will get chilled sitting out here." She vanished, leaving Ned alone. He sat there enjoying his thoughts. What book that had ever been written could be as absorbingly interesting as his present situation? He sat there, longing to learn more about this delightful household, with its air of frankness, albeit mingled with a certain reserve, and its nondescript members who all seemed so very much at home.

Mistress Tyrwhit found him in a brown study when she came upon him a few minutes later.

"You must come and see our children at supper, Mr. Coleman," she decided, when Ned had chatted to her for a few minutes—about his Suffolk home, as he had done to Madge—"We have children from all round the country side staying with us. We love children, and it makes it merry for us and good for Phyllis—She has no parents, so she lives here always—They will remind you of your little

nephews, and they are not all so big as Mr. Ironmonger, although some of them are more grown-up."

Ned followed her with alacrity, and found himself in a long, low room with small square-paned windows along one side, and a large fire-place in which a cheerful fire burned at the far end. A table covered with a white cloth ran down the centre of the room. Slices of bread and honey, cakes and apples were set on the table, at which were seated a dozen boys and girls of varying ages. They were simply dressed, and evidently of the peasant class. Madge, her dainty frock covered by a large brown overall, stood in attendance, with a lady whom Ned had not seen—Mistress Rose Throckmorton, sister to Will. The latter, Ned espied later, to his immense amusement, on the other side of the buttery hatch, coatless, with his white cambric sleeves rolled back, busily passing bowls of hot soup through from the kitchen beyond, where yet another lady-member of this strange household was engaged in cooking the repast.

Over the fire-place at the end of the room there hung a large and very beautifully carved crucifix.

Mistress Tyrwhit took up her place at the head of the table. She looked gravely at the little faces, and Ned noticed how gentle her brown eyes had become.

"I am going to say grace," she told them, "because the Father has gone out. He has gone to see a poor man who is very ill, so we will say a 'Hail Mary!' after grace. There will be no Laudes after Supper," she added, "the Father has taken Our Lord to the sick man instead."

The children looked disappointed, and one or two said, "Oh!" out loud. "Fie!" the Mother said reprovingly, "The poor man needs Our Lord's blessing more than we do. We mustn't be selfish."

She then said grace—a short prayer in Latin, followed by "Our Father" in English, in which all the children joined, with the "Hail Mary" and a "Gloria." Then the extra "Hail Mary." "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death," the children ended.

Ned listened in frank astonishment. So his hostess was a Catholic!

It was the last thing that he had suspected.

Grace said, the children fell to with an avidity. The process of the meal immensely interested Edward. Mistress Tyrwhit and Margaret waited on the children with their own hands. One of these latter, Ned noticed, was almost blind and needed a certain amount of assistance in the feeding operation. Another had a crutch at his side—a little wizened boy with tired eyes.

"We look after the children ourselves," Mistress Tyrwhit explained to Ned. "We can't afford to keep extra servants—we Catholics have a heavy drain on our purses, you know, with the fines and imposts, and we like to have the children, so we attend to them ourselves—our guests help us. They enjoy it, and work is good for all."

"Why am I not helping?" Ned asked, quite aggrievedly.

The Mother smiled. "We only let our guests work for their living when they are well off," she said. "You may help when you have found your purse and your horses. At present you are a mendicant, and our mendicant guests are never expected to work."

"Ods fish! but I'll wash the porridge bowls," Ned vowed defiantly. Mistress Tyrwhit regarded him gravely.

"Well," she said, "you may *dry* them. But this is a great favour."

Ned bent gallantly over her hand and kissed it.

"Tush!" she said, "we will send you on to Tunbridge Wells. You are a courtier!"

The meal finished, each child took its spoon and plate to the buttery hatch and passed it into the custody of Mr. William Throckmorton. Then the elder ones folded the long white cloth and put it away in the press, and ran off to join in the evening games which preceded bed.

The elder folk, with the exception of Mistress Tyrwhit, who remained with the children, then assembled in the kitchen on the other side of the buttery hatch. There was a second kitchen beyond, where the servants were preparing the evening meal for the grown-ups.

Then there commenced the merriest function that Ned had ever assisted at. The supper things were washed up

and put away, and the place cleaned up in a most business-like manner by Mistress Tyrwhit's guests. Ned was consumed with envy at Will Throckmorton's prowess with a dish clout. No dawdling or shirking was permitted. Mistress Tyrwhit saw to that. She peeped in every now and again, and Ned dropped the spoon that he was wiping from very fear when she came and quietly scrutinized him with her grave brown eyes. She deliberately examined his masterpiece, a stalwart two-pronged fork. "We generally like to get them clean between the prongs as well," she observed, and Ned realised the futility of a knowledge of six living languages and two dead ones when a man really wants to be useful in the world.

"Mr. Ironmonger washes up shockingly badly," the lady went on. "He will be annoyed to find that he has a rival."

The clearing up done, the curious little community migrated to the dining hall in due course, where an appetizing, though simple meal, had been set out by the servants. Here a merry little party sat down to the most festive repast imaginable. Mistress Tyrwhit presided with all the grace and charm of a great lady entertaining her guests. Mr. Ironmonger had returned, and said the grace in Latin, as the Mother had done. He looked fatigued, but his manners were as artless as ever. He was delighted to hear that Ned had been initiated into the kitchen work, and asked what he had done to deserve that honour.

"Did you break anything?" he demanded eagerly, "or burn a cooking pan?"

Ned disclaimed the aspersion with all due signs of resentment.

"But you must!" Mr. Ironmonger retorted. "Everybody does at first. It's expected of you. It pleases the Mother. And we all make haste to play the traitor and tell. Everybody betrays his brother's kitchen offences here. It's such mighty fun."

When the wine went round—a light red vintage—the company drank to the speedy recovery of Mr. Coleman's property. The latter found himself hoping most sincerely

that the event might be postponed indefinitely, if such could give him a pretext for stopping on in a useful capacity in this most fascinating household. He had quite come round to the old friar's view that his purse was indeed a possession obstructive to happiness if its recovery meant riding on to Tunbridge Wells, and the life which he had tasted and left behind in London. He felt egregiously at home in this curious, deliciously unusual family circle.

After supper there was an interval for "recreation." The ladies produced their needlework, and the men discussed the chances of recovering Ned's horses and baggage. They seemed to think it possible that Tom Rich might yet be apprehended if he had lingered in the country-side.

"The magistrates are alert enough in certain cases," Mr. Ironmonger said, with an enigmatic smile. "I am not intimate with them myself, but Mr. Throckmorton is on fairly good terms with them, although he showed them great inhospitality on one occasion when a certain one of them visited Mistress Tyrwhit."

"He was very discourteous," Mistress Tyrwhit observed, and Will grinned.

Ned wondered what they were driving at.

When nine o'clock came Mr. Ironmonger rose and left the room. The others followed, leaving Ned alone with Mistress Tyrwhit.

"We are going to take you into our confidence, Mr. Coleman," she said, in her quick, practical way. "You must know that we are breakers of the law at Wildwood. Mr. Ironmonger is a priest, and anyone informing on him would be the richer by a hundred pounds." She paused, and looked him steadily in the eyes. "Those children, whom you saw, are the children of Catholic parents. I gather them here in order that they may not forget their religion—each one comes for a spell to be instructed. Some, indeed, are being subverted from Protestantism, into which their parents have lapsed, and that is High Treason. I should be in gaol and in danger of death

were it not that the new magistrate is a great friend of mine, a very gallant gentleman of the Quaker persuasion. I trust this is not a very great shock to you?" she added rather roguishly. "I think you told me that you had been brought up a puritan? You have us all at your mercy, you see. I hope your conscience will not trouble you more than my good Quaker friend's?"

"I trust," Ned said, "that you will find in me a not ungallant gentleman though one of no fixed convictions."

He heard a sound beside him. Mr. Ironmonger had returned and was regarding him intently, and for the first time Ned noticed what a purposeful face the big child of the family possessed.

"I will give the Blessing after Compline," the latter said to Mistress Tyrwhit.

"You will find your way to bed, or stay here and read," the mother said to her guest. "We are going to chapel for Compline and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament." For the first time the suggestion did not insinuate a command, there was something in her voice as she pronounced the last words—something in her face—that sent a thrill through Ned.

"May I not come to chapel too?" he asked.

"I will show you the way," she said, by way of an answer. "Our chapel is not easy to find, even in the daylight."

She took a candle and led the way, up a staircase to the top of the house, and then along a narrow corridor in the slope of the roof. They had to bend their heads as they went.

The candle light illumined the lady's face as she went in front of Ned. They came to a little low door under a deep rafter.

"Our chapel door is like the gate of Heaven," Ned's guide said, "one must needs stoop to get through. There is another door and stair to make escape through when we are disturbed—you see, I am telling you all our secrets!" Her worn face lighted up with a wonderful radiance. Ned

gazed upon the "notorious" lady, and wondered what that light was.

A poet sought to describe it many centuries later:—

"The light that never was on sea or land ;

The consecration———"

Was enough

And for Ned, from that moment there sprang into being the complement to those two divine realities—the poet's dream.

The chapel was neither more nor less than a good sized garret, raftered and with sloping walls. At the end there stood a small altar with six unbleached wax candles set on either side of what appeared to be a plain oaken cabinet with doors. One of these candles on either side was lighted. A statue of the Blessed Virgin stood on a ledge to the left of the altar.

All the grown-up members of the household were gathered in the little sanctuary, and Peter, the little blind boy—a funny little figure muffled up in a fluffy wrap over his night things. Mistress Tyrwhit indicated a seat where Ned could place himself and play the onlooker without embarrassment, and took her place with the others, who were ranged in a row on either side of the chapel behind their praying desks. The domestic staff, consisting of Robin, a middle-aged man and his wife, and three rosy damsels, sat with the others. In a corner Ned espied his friend the friar kneeling upright and motionless, with outstretched arms.

Compline was first recited, and did not greatly interest Ned until the evening hymn was sung. Rose possessed a very pure and rich contralto voice, and Ned was delighted with the soft chanting of the Church's tender "Goodnight." This part of the devotions ended, Mr. Ironmonger left his seat and disappeared through a very unobtrusive door on the right of the altar. The others left their seats and clustered round the statue on the left and commenced to sing hymns as they knelt there. First a quaint old Anglo-Saxon ditty, and then one in Latin which fascinated Ned

by its beauty. He was unaware at the time that it was the composition of that same Jacopone da Todi who had previously held him in thrall with his muse.

The singing over, Mr. Ironmonger reappeared wearing a short white linen cotta over a cassock, and carrying an embroidered satin vestment on his arm. William Throckmorton, who had, meanwhile, lighted the other four candles on the altar, possessed himself of this latter and placed it over the priest's shoulders. The little assembly turned towards the altar, kneeling devoutly, as the vested figure approached the oaken box and opened the doors with a little golden key. The friar, who up till now had remained rigid, with outstretched arms, bowed himself until his forehead touched the ground.

The priest took Something out of the cabinet—this was the impression Ned got—he had yet to learn the meaning of the devotion which in later years became the principal public evening office of the lay folk. With this Something in his hand he made the sign of the cross over the assembly, who all bowed their heads reverently, including the little blind boy, who ducked his shock head at the moment of the blessing, although no bell was rung.

The priest then quietly replaced the little shining object in its tabernacle, leaving the doors open so that the contents were exposed to view. William Throckmorton removed the gorgeous vestment from his shoulders, and he retired to a praying desk in front of the altar where he recited a prayer for the King and for England.

The congregation then left the chapel silently, with the exception of Margaret, who remained, together with the priest and the friar who knelt in his corner absorbed in prayer.

"You must let me guide you to your chamber," Mistress Tyrwhit said to Ned, "or you will certainly lose your way."

Ned was very silent. There had been an extraordinary atmosphere of beatitude about the little garret chapel that seemed to have folded itself round about him. He was mystified, and once again he longed to ask questions—about this strange worship so different from the sonorous

psalm-singing and pompous extempore prayer that he was accustomed to. It was all so amazingly simple—he would have smiled had he heard it described—and yet it had brought him to his knees! It possessed such a child-like element, and yet it had filled him with a new reverence for these people who understood what it meant. For Mr. Ironmonger, especially, he felt a new sort of awe which the most gifted preacher at Cambridge had failed to inspire—and this in the face of the former's everyday demeanour.

"I wish you could have heard the children sing," Mistress Tyrwhit said, breaking in, not inappropriately, on his thoughts. "We generally have the Laudes—the hymns to Our Lady—and the Salut after the children's supper, just before they go to bed. They love it, and Our Lord likes to bless the little ones—but the priest had to carry the Sacrament to a sick man—fortunately we had it reserved—it is not always so—I'm glad He blessed you to-night, too, Mr. Coleman." She looked with kind eyes at her guest. Ned felt the strange unearthly atmosphere fold itself yet closer about his spirit.—The simple words seemed to have made him conscious that there had been one other present in the little assembly of Whom he had not taken note.

"We were obliged to let Peter come," the lady went on. "He was so hugely disappointed, and he lay awake, so we brought him up out of bed. He can but see a glimmer but he always knows when the blessing is given—he feels it, he tells us."

They had reached Ned's door.

"Your days must be very tiring," he said to his hostess, marking the lines on the thin, pale face. "How glad you must be to get to rest."

The lady smiled. "I shall sleep for an hour," she said, "and then I go back to the chapel to replace Madge. Our Exposition will last through the night—we have it once a week for the return of England to the Catholic faith, when we can get a priest. Sometimes it is not safe for them to remain here. Other times the authorities leave us alone. But we generally do manage to have our Exposition." Her eye kindled, and she smiled a semi-defiant smile.

Ned drew a mental picture of the magistrates of Sussex pitting their authority against this one wilful woman. He almost smiled !

"But you surely need rest?" he burst out, in deep concern, coming back to the moment.

"It *is* rest," the Mother said, gently, "to watch with the Watcher. But you must sleep well, Mr. Coleman—and pray for us."

And so the notorious lady of Wildwood left him.

Ned woke once during the night, albeit that his bed was luxuriously comfortable. Some words seemed to be running in his head :—

"He watching over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps."

CHAPTER VIII

NED did not waste much time in bed next morning after he woke up. He conjectured that there might be no end of interesting things going on at Wildwood in the early hours in which Mistress Tyrwhit's guests might be allowed to participate, and he was annoyed with himself for having slept to so late an hour. Dressing quickly, he made haste downstairs. In the hall he was eagerly greeted by Will Throckmorton with the information that his property had been salvaged by a doughty woodman.

"You are no longer a mendicant," Will said, "your good time's over." Ned's face had fallen perceptibly on receiving the news of the recovery of his wealth. He would have liked to have postponed it for a while at any rate, since so long as it remained where the friar had discreetly placed it, the hospitality of Wildwood was assured to him—and the society of Mistress Madge! Will regarded him with much amusement. "We are to ride to Tunbridge after breakfast," he said, "to retrieve the rest of your property." He took Ned to the oak parlour where a meal for two was set out. Ned experienced bitter dissatisfaction in finding that he had missed the general meal.

"That took place hours ago," Will Throckmorton said, cheerfully. "I was late out of my bed like you." Mistress Tyrwhit made her appearance during their breakfast. She brought Ned's missing property with her and presented it to him.

"With all our apologies," she said.

"I would fain reward the friar," Ned replied, "but I fear a gold piece would not please him, so I must needs give it to that egregious rogue, the woodman who recovered it."

"You must make haste and look after your other possessions," the lady said. "We will lend you one of our horses. The Justices of the Peace are very shrewd and industrious people in this part of the country. I don't doubt but that they have your man in custody."

She left the two young men to finish their meal. There was no sign of Margaret.

"You will have to put up with a very poor mount, unless I may offer you mine," Will said. "Mistress Tyrwhit's best horses were impounded last week under the law. You know no Catholic may own a horse of value over five pounds, and every now and again some wiseacre starts a rumour of popish activity, and the magistrates think it politic to remind the local Catholics of the statutes that are generally ignored. Mistress Tyrwhit always gets a visitation. Her horses have been taken before, and some admirer—as often as not a Protestant—makes her a present of them when they are sold."

Robin, the serving-man, brought the horses to the door. Ned refused to avail himself of Will Throckmorton's offer of his fine mare, and mounted the rather sorry steed from the depleted Wildwood stable. Robin rode with them on a remarkably slow and aged beast.

Mistress Tyrwhit and Madge were there to wish them good luck. The former had left her class of scholars, for she was keeping school on the shady lawn. The children had been singing their lessons, or else interspersing lessons with song. "Waggaboney" was sitting with them, acting, apparently, as a kind of monitor.

Mistress Madge looked more entrancing than ever this morning. If only she had been riding along with them! But Mistress Madge was cook to-day—even then there were potatoes waiting to be peeled, and her adieux had to be cut short. She vanished into the kitchen, at the door of which Rose Throckmorton, Will's pretty sister, stood waving her hand gaily. Ned looked back over his shoulder as he rode away, and carried the picture he saw along with him, albeit that Madge was not in it. Mistress Tyrwhit had rejoined her class, and was seated, surrounded by her

children who were singing a particularly merry ditty. "That's Jacopone," Will said. "I don't mean the dog—the old Italian poet. Rose has put it into English for them. She has some skill at it. The Mother makes them get no end of sport out of religion—but I expect I've shocked you," he added.

"I don't know," Ned said. "It's just a new idea."

The two young men rode ahead, leaving Robin to choose his own pace.

Ned's luck certainly seemed to have turned. The Justice of the Peace at Tunbridge, to whom they applied, was able to tell them that two of Ned's horses and his baggage were in safe keeping, awaiting to be claimed by their owner. Tom Rich, it appeared, had over-reached himself for once. One of the Justice's officers, a man with a taste for ferreting out crime which would have stood him in good stead as a journalist some three hundred years later, had remarked Mr. Rich on the road and become suspicious. He had joined himself on to the other's cortège, and engaged the apparently unsuspecting Tom in conversation, which, in spite of the latter's ingenuity, increased his suspicions. It had been the officer's intention to get Tom arrested at the first opportunity that presented itself. Accordingly, he had alighted at a certain house of refreshment, inviting Tom to accompany him within. But Mr. Rich had become a man of austere habit on a sudden. He preferred to remain outside, and wait while the other refreshed himself, and when the Justice's man emerged with two sturdy henchmen from the inn stable to effect an arrest, Mr. Rich had ridden away at a gallop, leaving the two horses and the baggage behind.

Ned, on the whole, might consider himself fortunate. Although the defaulter had absconded on one of his horses still the others remained, and his baggage. He had no difficulty in establishing his claim. The Justice showed no desire to doubt his identity, even when Ned informed him that he had been hospitably entertained on the previous night at Wildwood. Of this little episode, however, the Magistrate had something to say to Ned when William

Throckmorton was no longer present—the latter had thought it desirable to withdraw himself while Ned “got to business” concerning his projects, etc.

“Let me warn you, young Sir,” he said, in a fatherly fashion, “against being found at Wildwood. This Mistress Tyrwhit is an exceedingly mischievous person of no good reputation. She harbours persons who are a danger to the State, and enemies of the King. I assure you that many a foul murder has been planned and plotted under her roof, and you, as a guest, might find yourself involved in the grossest crimes and abominations.”

The Magistrate’s manner was immensely impressive—he was obviously sincere. Ned stood gazing at his solemn visage, not knowing whether to laugh or not. It was such a grotesque representation of the household that he had just left. He concluded that the worthy Justice was slightly deranged in his wits, or, at any rate, a fanatic of a quite extraordinary type. He thought it best to keep a straight face, and thank the good man for his well-meant advice.

The restoration of his property involved certain formalities and expenses. These settled, Ned rejoined Will Throckmorton, who had adjourned to an inn to await him.

“You will lose your reputation if you are seen too much with me,” the young man said. “You must establish your orthodoxy first, then you may do as you like.”

Ned repeated to him what the Magistrate had said about Wildwood and its owner, laughing at the poor man’s “crank” as he did so.

Will eyed him curiously.

“But that is the general opinion,” he said, “in a certain quarter. Of course the poor folk know better, and one or two of Mistress Tyrwhit’s personal friends, but it is quite true that Wildwood is regarded as a place where a plot to murder the King, or anyone else who became obstructive, could be hatched with the full concurrence of its mistress. The Court ladies look upon her as a bold bad woman.” He smiled uncommonly grimly.

Ned became thoughtful. It is a large order to suddenly

find that the world at large is mad, and that certain accepted principles that one has been brought up on are tottering on their foundations. Ned's quick thinking apparatus was applying this incredible misconception to other things besides the household at Wildwood.

"You will find this inn a comfortable one to lie at to-night," Will observed, "if you don't think of riding on to The Wells."

Ned started. Somehow he had assumed that he was to return to Wildwood. The hospitality had been so cordial that he had never dreamed but that he would be invited to return from his quest in any case. Mistress Tyrwhit had not said "Good-bye" to him with any sense of finality, and cruel thought! he had not said "Good-bye" at all to Madge.

Will Throckmorton's glance sheered off sideways as it met Ned's.

He knew what the other was thinking, and he was sympathetic.

He had shirked this moment ever since the discovery of the wherewithal had made the offer of Wildwood's hospitality no longer a necessity.

Had Ned been stranded without baggage, and unable to present himself at Groombridge, the offer of an asylum at the proscribed home of recusancy might have been justified. As it was Wildwood was destined to become an interlude of which discretion would retain a short memory.

"But I must needs return to Wildwood first." Ned gasped faintly. "I have not thanked Mistress Tyrwhit for her hospitality. What a graceless clown she would think me!"

Will found it incumbent on him to explain to this young man sitting opposite to him in the inn parlour exactly how matters stood.

"It's not discreet for anyone to stop at Wildwood," he said, "or even to visit there—especially anyone in your position. It might ruin your chances for good if it were known. 'Twas a thousand pities that you told the Magistrate where you spent the night. We never have strangers

there, except of course the poor folk who get fed." He laughed. "That's how you got in, as a medicant. It was one of the Mother's fancies to take you into her confidence. She does it with people now and again, and she never makes a mistake. It's a most amazing risky thing. She trusted you right away."

Ned felt his heart swell with pleasure. "I don't care if its discreet or not," he said, "I must ride back to Wildwood!"

William Throckmorton shook his head. "She told me not to let you do it," he answered. "It would blight your prospects at the very onset," she said. "I tried to persuade her to let me bring you back in any case." Will went on, waxing confidential, "but she wouldn't. She said you might go back some day when you knew what you were doing—after you had been to court and got your footing in the world."

"Then I suppose I may as well stop here," Ned said, in grim resignation. He felt as though he were faced by a blank wall. In his youthfulness he told himself quite sincerely that his prospects no longer existed except in so far as the vista included the proscribed abode of Mistress Tyrwhit and her niece, with its sweet environment of mirth and sanctity, and the strange mystery of the Unknown that brooded in the little garret chapel of that home of happy childhood—the perpetual childhood of the soul.

Will Throckmorton rose and stretched himself. He bade Ned "Good-bye" with obvious regret. The two had taken more than kindly to one another.

"We are certain to meet again," he said. "I shall be going on to the Wells while the Court is there. I ought to be there now, but Wildwood is better fun, and I'm a devil for getting enjoyment out of life. You'll enjoy the Wells though. We disport ourselves grandly there. I can promise you a rare time if you come there in good company. Mr Packer of Groombridge House is a name to conjure with in respectable circles. He is a great bishop's man, and prodigious loyal—His father built a chapel in his grounds and dedicated it to St. Charles, and that when

the late King was still alive!* Mr. Packer will be the best of possible antidotes to Wildwood."

Ned was feeling a pronounced prejudice against his legitimate destination. He already had begun to loathe the spiritual proprieties of Groombridge House. He wished his cousin Roger might be found elsewhere. "I'm a puritan," he said to Will, quite sulkily.

"Fie!" Will answered. "that's not the right line now-a-days, you must be a bishop's man."

"You're not a bishop's man," Ned retorted.

Mr. William Throckmorton looked quite frankly surprised. "I?" he repeated. Then he laughed amusedly. "I was talking of politics," he explained, "not religion."

When Will had departed, Ned sat disconsolately and reviewed his plans. Here he was in practically the same position as when he left London. The last two days had been an absolute interlude. He might well have dreamt it all—and yet the events of these few short hours seemed to have given a new colour to life—and moreover to have taken all the old colour out of it! It remained to be seen how soon that new colour would fade under the glare of the gay life that awaited him.

* See Evelyn's Diary

CHAPTER IX

THE reader may take it from the historian, for whom we naturally have a great respect, that Tunbridge Wells, at the period when Ned made its acquaintance, was a particularly gay and diverting "watering place." Bath had barely come into fashion, and the Wells at Tunbridge still held the premier position. The presence of the Court brought all sorts of gay folk, and physically sound, to the Wells, medicated according to the legend, by the inserting of his Satanic Majesty's nose into the cooling, but so far non-chalybeate spring, after sturdy St. Dunstan had nipped it with a pair of red-hot tongs. My Lady Castlemaine's retinue was of the gayest. Her sumptuously furnished house was the rendezvous of the fashionable mob, and the favourite haunt of His Majesty. Mr. Roger Coleman was an amiable, eminently foolish-looking person with a long straight chin and a foppish manner of speaking. He dressed exquisitely, as became a gentleman pensioner. He welcomed Ned with the utmost good nature when the latter presented himself at Groombridge House on the day following his dismissal from Wildwood.

Groombridge House, as readers of Mr. Evelyn's diary will remember, was a moated residence situated in a woody valley. Mr. Packer, its owner, was a staunch King's man. Ned felt a predilection for "King' men." His bringing-up should have made him a strong Parliamentarian, but our hero had reacted from the teachings of his boyhood, so uncongenial to his romance-loving nature. To him the exiled King had always been a hero. He had pitied him frankly when he heard the story of his detention among the

Presbyterian magnates, and had suffered a whipping on that account. Oftentimes he had sat curled up in the window-seat in the long gallery at Burnt Ely dreaming dreams of the King's deliverance and the coming into his own that had actually occurred while the would-be champion was learning the classics at College. The thought that he was really to see the King, and possibly speak to him, filled Ned with excitement. He rode to Groombridge on his remaining horse in the utmost friendliness with the wicked world that he had thought to throw over on the previous day. He was fortunate enough to obtain an audience of Mr. Packer's guest. Roger Coleman had been prepared for Ned's visit by a letter from his spouse in which the country cousin was described in the manner peculiar to the writer:—

"A most drole personne," the lady wrote, in the haphazard orthography of the period, "hee wil make you fitt to split yr sides, hee be that gode and innocent. I send him away quickly lest hee subvert my Lord Rochester. Do you keep him away from yr lady frends also, for the silly thing hath a way with him. Doe not my deare Roger allow him to take you to church. You be dul enow already in gode sooth. Yr loving and devoted wif."

Ned explained his ambitions to his cousin with all frankness. He wished to see the King, and to be introduced into the Court circle, and, if possible, to get a secretaryship to some nobleman, a post for which he possessed good qualifications.

Roger stroked his long chin meditatively.

"Barbara might do something for you," he remarked. Mr. Roger Coleman prided himself on his intimacy with the prevailing lady. "My wife says that you have a way with the ladies," he added, surveying Ned critically, "although I must say I should not have thought it."

"Who is Barbara?" Ned enquired.

Mr. Coleman's simper became an honest grin. He was immensely tickled.

"You are up from the country," he chuckled. "Who is Barbara?" Gad zook how it would tickle His Majesty

to hear you! Barbara is my Lady Castlemaine. His Majesty's *pro tem*—*pro tem* means, 'for the time being.' That is my joke, you must not repeat it as your own," he added warningly. "Barbara can do what she likes with His Majesty, so if you please her she may do something to forward you. She is a wonderful woman, Barbara. She did weep and threaten to slay her children, unless the King should dissolve the parliament that would not give her money. His Majesty is well affrighted of her."

"Whom will she slay if the King declines to make me his secretary?" Ned asked. "I don't think that I like Barbara."

"You will when you have seen her," Mr. Roger said, naïvely. "Unless you like not the dark style of beauty. She is a truly magnificent creature. Lord, but what a time she gave his Majesty when he brought Miss Stuart to the Wells. Such tears, such shrieks, as were heard all over the house. 'Tis so, that Providence arranges that women should get their way."

"Not all women," Ned said.

With great good nature Mr. Roger Coleman arranged to take his young kinsman to Tunbridge Wells that very afternoon. They drove over in an imposing coach belonging to Mr. Packer, who also had business in the town, and who accompanied them. Ned incautiously letting out the fact that he had been entertained at Wildwood, the latter looked grave.

Like the other county dignitary, he gave Ned the necessary warning.

"'Tis a place of no reputation, Wildwood," he remarked. "You will do well to keep clear of it, Mr. Coleman. Much wickedness is hatched there by the notorious Mistress Tyrwhit, who is a papist, and of perverted morals like all such."

"Is not the Queen a papist?" Ned hazarded, warm in the defence of the notorious lady.

"The Queen is a foreigner," Mr. Packer said. "No English man or woman has occasion to be a papist. 'Tis

wickedness for them to accept papal dogma, and gives to grave immorality of life."

"Then it is the combination of popery-plus-'Englishness' that makes it a poison?" Ned queried "Tis a strange summing together—why! 'tis like the ciphering sum that I did as a small child, when I did multiply quarts by ounces, and work out a fine answer in shillings."

Mr. Roger Coleman waxed uncomfortable at the forwardness of his kinsman from the country. "My cousin hath learned languages," he hastened to explain, "but he hath no skill in mathematics."

Mr. Packer eyed the young man grimly, and Ned blushed, ashamed already of his effrontery and ill manners in disputing with his host.

"If you are affected towards popery," Mr. Packer said, "you will do well to conceal it, young sir."

It was not said unkindly. Ned had no cause to complain of his treatment by the master of Groombridge. The latter took the most benevolent interest in his prospects. He drove up to my Lady Castlemaine's door with Ned and his cousin, and wished our hero the best of good fortune as he deposited him on the threshold of the magnificent mansion rented for Barbara, Lady Castlemaine, by his Majesty, at the charges of the people of England.

Roger looked dubiously at Ned. "Suppose," he suggested at last, "that you take a stroll round the grounds, 'tis a sweet place—while I first get audience of the Lady. I will come and fetch you later, if she feels disposed to see you. Barbara has her moods, and it is possible that she may not wish to receive a stranger. I, of course, am different." He simpered self-consciously. Ned expressed his willingness to stay in the grounds, they looked alluring enough. Stretches of green lawn, with park land beyond. A gate led into a walled garden. "Yonder is my Lady's bower," Roger said, "full of sweet flowers. I will take you there, and you will find much to interest you, if you love plants and so forth."

Ned admitted a love for "plants and so forth," and Roger conducted him to the pleasaunce with an air of

proprietorship that amused him not a little. He shrewdly suspected that Mr. Roger Coleman's "at homeness" was largely a matter of bluff.

The garden was certainly a sweet place. A tangled perfume of fragrant spring flowers, filled the spot where the rose would reign later on. A hedge bordered one side of the garden so that a glorious view of the wooded hills could be obtained. Ned strolled along the narrow paths, under green arches, and gave the worship of his heart to this matchless May-day. If only Mistress Madge had been there, what a frolic they could have had. The garden, somehow, suggested the frolicsome side of life, with its cunningly contrived turns and corners, and unexpected nooks, that cried "Peep bo!" and then passed you on to quite a different path to the one you sought. It suggested hide-and-seek to Ned till he fairly longed for a companion to indulge in that infantile diversion with him.

Even as his thoughts took this frivolous direction he turned precipitately where the downward-sloping path wheeled suddenly round, and ran up against someone approaching from another path, sloping also, apparently with the mischievous intention of making unwary persons collide. The impact was considerable. Ned's hat went right off, and the other's—he was a big man wearing a wig, went over one ear.

"I beg your pardon," Ned gasped, rubbing his own hurts. "'Twas my fault, but one doesn't know what one is coming to in this elfish place."

"'Twas shaped and fashioned for this same purpose," the other said, setting his hat straight, and adjusting his stock. "It's designer was a goblin."

He was a swarthy-faced man, with hard features, and lines cut deeply into his face, which was singularly wooden in expression.

"It would be a rare place for hide-and-seek," Ned observed. This stranger was probably one of My Lady's guests, and a person of consequence, but Ned felt quite at ease with him, although there was a certain haughtiness in his bearing. Ned, being in very sooth, as Mrs. Roger

Coleman has said, "up from the country," conceived that he might be My Lord Castlemaine, and speculated no further.

The strange gentleman smiled, a slow and difficult smile, and surveyed Ned with interest.

"What were you playing at when I met you?" he asked.

"I am waiting for my cousin," Ned explained, "he has promised to introduce me to my Lady Castlemaine, if she be agreeable. He is with her now."

"Then you probably won't be introduced," the other said. "My Lady is only agreeable when she is agreeable, and she had the devil's own temper in her last night." He thrust out his heavy under lip, and eyed Ned with a sort of sombre amusement.

"I was to be presented to her," Ned explained, "so that she might interest His Majesty in me."

"Why?" the other asked. "Are you interesting?—but of course you are! you play at hide-and-seek!" There was no perceptible change in the wooden countenance, yet Ned suddenly found that he liked this man immensely. In a way he reminded him of the Wildwood folk. At any rate he was different from the pompous personages that he had been used to at Cambridge. A thought interpolated itself in the midst of the impressions that he was receiving—he wished that this stranger had been at Wildwood. It would have increased the fun.

The stranger gentleman went on.

"I shouldn't have anything to do with the King, if I were you," he said. "He's a worthless fellow, and his court is most corrupt."

There was just a suspicion of the nasal in his tone.

"I don't believe everything I hear," Ned said, and eyed the other with sturdy defiance.

The wooden face slightly relaxed. "That's well," its owner said, "but I speak on very good authority."

"I dare say," Ned retorted, still sturdily defiant. He was quite absurdly disappointed that this ugly attractive man should turn out to be no King's man—he did not

look like a Parliamentarian. "You may know the facts, sir, but you may not know the truth. The facts of the case may sometimes be hideous untruths." He blushed, as he had done in the coach, at his temerity. "I know not much about the King since he came to reign, but I know that he reckoned the noblest men among those who served him with devotion in his dark days, and methinks it must be good that inspires such devotion. To hold the King worthless were to cast a slur on many great and brave men, for I am told that those who served him always believed in him, as well as loved him." The speaker paused, conscious that he had made a speech.

The other regarded him in silence. His whole face seemed to stiffen. "And *I* am told," he said grimly and bitterly, "that the King has no sense of gratitude to his friends. Beware how you give him your fealty. 'Tis not a game that pays."

"I would hold myself proud to serve the King," Ned answered, "like those who served him in the old days, with no thought of reward."

"I pray the King may meet you," the other said, "if those be your true sentiments. There is a distressful shortage in fools of your persuasion at Court."

They fell to conversation on other, less controversial subjects, Ned recounting his adventures, to the great diversion of his companion. When he came to tell of his entertainment at Wildwood, the other's interest increased.

"Wildwood?" he queried, "you have been there? How goes Mistress Tyrwhit?"

"You know her?" Ned cried, delighted. "Have you ever stopped at Wildwood?"

"I have not had the honour," the strange gentleman said, "Mistress Tyrwhit is somewhat choice as to the moral character of her guests."

"She is very hospitable," Ned said.

The strange gentleman lifted his hat:—

"Mistress Tyrwhit is a queen among women," he said.

"She is very loyal," Ned remarked, anxious to score a

point over this admirer of Mistress Tyrwhit, who was not a King's man. "She has prayers said for the King"—

"How do you know?" the other interrupted, fixing poor Ned with his shrewd black eyes.

"Because she is a prayful woman, and she loves him," Ned replied. He had evaded a betrayal of Mistress Tyrwhit's devotional system.

"Whom did you meet there?" the stranger went on. "You know, of course, that Mistress Tyrwhit harbours priests—they have often told me of their adventures there." His shrewd eyes twinkled.

"You should not have told me this. I am a Protestant, and it might have been injurious to Mistress Tyrwhit, had I been over nice in my conscience," was Ned's answer.

"Well fenced!" the other said, admirably. "Beshrew me, but I do believe you have known all along that I was the King!"

Had this been the case, His Majesty could have entertained no doubt as to Ned's sincerity after this announcement of his identity.

The astounded youth sat for a moment perfectly petrified with embarrassment and dismay. Then he leapt to his feet from the seat where they were sitting, and faced His Majesty. He then dropped on one knee, being all the time reduced to speechlessness.

"How now!" the King said, "we have become comrades—'Tis too late for any s'please-your-Majesty, like your cousin. How he must be giving Barbara to yawn! He only amuses her for a very short time, that excellent man, your cousin. Shall we go and find them, or (mischievously), shall we have a game of hide and seek?"

It is possible that the royal mandate might have been carried out, had not Mr. Roger Coleman appeared at that moment in the distance.

Roger's exquisite figure assumed a right-angular form as soon as he caught sight of the merry monarch.

"S'please-your-Majesty!" he gasped, and came to a dead stop in his confusion.

"Your cousin and I were about to have a game of hide-

and-seeK," the King said severely. "Pray, do not disturb us!"

Roger bowed again, at a more acute angle. "You will, of course, instruct your cousin," His Majesty went on, "that he hide himself so that he be found by me!" He turned to Ned. "Your cousin had the effrontery to beat me at bowls, the other day," he said. "He has apologised duly and frequently."

"S'please-your-Majesty, I didn't really win! 'Twas the pitch that had got awry with the rains!" Roger murmured.

"Your kinsman has kept me diverted while you detained my Lady Castlemaine," the merciless monarch went on. "He tells me he wants a post as whipping-boy to some fine hypocrite near about the Court. He calls it a secretaryship—he is sufficiently simple, this young cousin of yours."

"S'please-your-Majesty, he has several tongues," Roger began.

The King interrupted. "Good!" he said, "that is needed—several tongues and as many faces, if he is to be secretary to a politician. But I have a mind to take him over myself, and school him for my personal use. He has certain qualities that would be useful to me."

"He has a fluent pen," Roger whispered—"S'please your Majesty."

"He's a fool," the King said. "A fool with brains is what I have a use for."

"You will find him honest," the bewildered Robert said, forgetting to add "S'please your Majesty."

"Didn't I tell you he was a fool?" the King enquired.

"Your Majesty will be calling me a fool next," Roger simpered.

"Nay, Roger," the King said. "You be prodigious dull, but I would doubt me if I would call you a fool; but see you to this—I command your young cousin's presence at Court to-morrow morning."

Ned stood there all the time wondering when he should wake up from his dream and find himself in his little attic

at Cambridge mastering the Spanish tongue, or sharing a frugal meal with the friar's Waggabony.

"Now take him home," Charles went on. "Keep him off My Lady Castlemaine, or I shall have no use for him." He turned on his heel and walked off towards the house, along the path, gay with many-coloured pansies, and scented with the sweet and subtle perfume of the violet.

CHAPTER X

ROGER COLEMAN was in a flutter of satisfaction at the success of his mission on his young cousin's behalf. "It comes of having a friend at Court," he reminded Ned. "I consider that I contrived it all for you uncommon well." Ned had no desire to dispute the measure in which his cousin's diplomacy had contributed to the amazing event of the afternoon. He still felt in a dream. He kept silence while Roger rattled on.

They picked up Mr. Packer, by a previous arrangement, on the Pantiles, where they found him sitting regarding the gay crowd of marvellously fascinating folk with the calm eye of a philosopher. It was Mr. Packer's admirable method to watch the ways of men without participating in them. He found the Pantiles a sufficiently engaging study. The news of Edward's good fortune he received with the sincerest pleasure, and insisted that the fortunate young man should return with his cousin to Groombridge House for the night. They drove round, accordingly, by Ned's lodging and collected his belongings. Our hero thus found himself a by no means negligible member of a house-party of more or less distinguished persons.

Mr. Packer's guests were mostly politicians of the class known as "Trimmers." They discussed the King's ill-advisedness with decorously puckered brows, and inveighed against the nonconformist Parliamentarians with refreshing zest. The mere mention of the popish party served to plunge the whole company into the deepest gloom, and dark hints of unutterable things were dropped that made

Ned felt creepy up his spine. They discussed the prospects of the Dutch War, and the passing of a certain Act of Parliament called "The Conventicle Act," by which all meetings of more than five persons other than the family for any religious purpose not according to the Book of Common Prayer were declared unlawful and seditious, and fines and imprisonment inflicted on those who infringed the Law in this respect. The Act was unanimously praised by the company as upholding moderation, and striking a blow at the extremists, that is, at those fanatics whose religion was not amenable to readjustment by the Law.

Mr. Packer's house-party was eminently respectable. It threw dice with a slightly deprecating air, and played cards for strictly moderate sums. They contrived to keep our hero well in his place at a moment when he might have been in danger of mental intoxication. There was something so very superior about Mr. Packer's guests. Ned, in spite of his brilliant prospects, almost imagined himself back at Burnt Ely in tacit disgrace for some potential iniquity. They attended chapel early in the evening, but Ned, I regret to say, took but little cognisance of the decent and orderly ceremony observed by Mr. Packer's chaplain, a worthy man, by the way, who had in his time declined to have his spiritual ideas shaped by Act of Parliament. His strong approval of the Conventicle Act was doubtless due to his natural attachment to the only form of worship permitted by that peace-making measure. Our hero occupied himself during the good man's ministrations, in reviewing his future. He dreamed a dream in which he presented Mistress Madge to the King, for—oh joyous thought! Wildwood was no longer barred to him! Had not the King himself spoken of it in the friendliest way! Had he not called Mistress Tyrwhit a queen among women! Poor Ned! He dreamed many dreams that night—in the comfortable and imposing chapel dedicated to the memory of the late King. He would become His Majesty's right-hand man and make his England the mightiest country in the world. France should cringe to her, and Holland be her vassal, and no man should suffer

want in her borders. What greater things than these could he encompass for his country?

Next morning the coach once more conveyed Edward Coleman to Tunbridge Wells—this time to the Royal Lodgings, occupied by the King and Queen, for Her Majesty was also taking the waters. Roger and Mr. Packer again accompanied him, and entered into speculations as to the King's intentions in regard to the palpitating youth seated in front of them. He was too old for a page, Mr. Packer opined; and Roger conceived that his appearance would not be considered of sufficient comeliness for a personal attendant.

Arrived at the Royal Residence, after a series of preliminaries, Ned was ushered into the King's Council Chamber, where the monarch transacted necessary business with the utmost reluctance.

There were two "counsellors" with His Majesty—My Lords Clifford and Arundel. These latter were seated at a table, the King sitting some way off in an arm-chair playing with a small spaniel.

Their lordships applied themselves to Ned in the most businesslike manner. They extracted from him an account of himself, as well as the written testimonials from his tutors. These latter made an excellent impression. The young man who had attracted the King's freakish fancy was evidently a person of very considerable parts. Ned liked the look of My Lord Arundel of Wardour. He knew him by name as a man who had served the King well, and the fine, weather-beaten face expressed both kindliness and strength of character. Charles appeared to take no notice of the interrogation. Once or twice he made the dog that he was playing with set up a series of barks that might have proved distracting. When their lordships had done with Ned they dismissed him into another room where he waited in a state of great trepidation the result of his examination. The dog barked incessantly in the audience chamber. Presently the Counsellors emerged. They surveyed Ned with great benevolence. "His Majesty will speak with you," Lord Clifford said, and Ned returned to

the royal presence with his knees knocking together from sheer nervousness. He had the sense of Royalty bearing him down. He could not believe that he had chatted with, and contradicted, the august personage who now stood in the centre of the room, a fine and kingly figure.

"I have served you a scurvy turn, Mr. Coleman," the King said, and Ned's heart sank into his boots. The King had thought better of his whim and was about to dismiss him!

"We have decided," Charles went on, "to take you into our service."

He watched the effect of the words on the eager, expressive face of the lad before him, his own remaining perfectly wooden. "I intend to send you abroad to continue your studies, and to gain a knowledge of the countries of Europe—after which you may possibly be useful as a secretary to one of my under-secretaries."

Ned stood gasping at the great things that were happening to him.

He stammered an answer as best he could. His faculty of ready speech had deserted him with a vengeance.

"You will be a faithful servant of the crown?" Charles queried. "You will not change your politics and play up to my enemies. Some of them can offer higher salaries than I give."

Ned threw up his head. "The Monarchy is my religion," he said, with sparkling eyes. "Besides, I could change my politics for no other reason than conscience."

Charles eyed him. "Have you a conscience?" he asked. "And have you no religion besides the Monarchy?"

"Religion has never yet appealed to me," Edward answered. "Except"—he hesitated and stopped short. "But I have a conscience I hope."

"Now go," the King said with sudden impatience. "My Lord Clifford will hand you over to somebody. I've done as much of business as I can do with!" He picked up the dog and turned away.

"Go and find Clifford," he said, "and tell him that you are to be well amused for a week at least, and see that you

have a merry time. Work is a mistake. There is much to be said for the devil in that he invented idleness."

Ned took his leave, first humbly kneeling and kissing His Majesty's hand, the one unoccupied in holding the minute spaniel.

As soon as he had gone, Charles set the dog down, and went over and rang a bell with considerable energy. It was answered by a page. "Find me Mr. Huddleston," the King said. A few minutes later, in obedience to the summons, an elderly man, with a thin care-worn face, very gentle in expression, presented himself. His Majesty invited his visitor to take a seat—an unusual sign of respect.

He got to business with remarkable celerity.

"Father," he said, "there is a young man of considerable parts whom I wish to make into a secretary. I wish him to serve my interests faithfully, but I have not the wherewithal to pay for fidelity—Parliament takes care of that!—He vows great devotion to the Crown, but he will look for recompense, if it be only the Crown—You must make him a papist."

"Is he affected towards the Faith?" the other asked.

"He has no other religion, and he has a conscience," the King said. "Moreover, he has seen Mistress Tyrwhit pray."

"I trust she was praying for Your Majesty," the old priest said.

"She was," Charles replied, with an elfish smile. "That's how he came to let it out. It might have been her undoing had he said it to another—My Lord Shaftesbury, for the nonce, he is rabid on the Conventicle Act—The boy has intellect and a soul. See that you make a papist of him."

The priest fixed his wistful eyes on the speaker. "I would that Your Majesty were as solicitous for your own soul as this lad's," he said.

The King returned the gaze with his insolent black eyes.

"Barbara still sulks," he observed, "because I brought poor Fanny to the Wells."

Sir Thomas Clifford carried out his orders admirably and

Ned enjoyed a most excellently good time during the next fortnight. Under the wing of the Treasurer he entered into the gaiety of the Court life at the Wells without getting into too close touch with its less reputable side.

Sir Thomas Clifford, an honest and upright man enough to win the approbation of the fastidious Mr. Evelyn himself, kept an eye on his young charge.

Ned, moreover, found himself frequently in the company of the Benedictine Father Huddleston, who on account of his services to the King at the battle of Worcester, on which occasion he had saved the fugitive monarch's life, was permitted freedom to follow his sacred calling. He had many bookish conversations with the scholarly old man, and for the first time developed an interest in the study of theology. It was during these gay weeks at the Wells, in the midst of much junketing and frivolity, that Ned began to take a serious interest in religious controversy. He borrowed books of Father Huddleston—the works of Cressy and other divines, and read them with eager interest native to his character. It was really quite a fascinating intellectual exercise to follow the Roman Catholic Church in establishing her claims. Ned pursued it ardently in the intervals when he was not amusing himself on the Pantiles, or at the lawn dances arranged for the delectation of Her Majesty the Queen, who delighted in that form of pastime.

Ned's first introduction to Queen Catherine was at one of these functions. He had heard much about Her Majesty, and associated her chiefly with religious ceremonies and an environment of priests and monks. He was greatly surprised, therefore, to find King Charle's consort a stout, very gay and good-humoured lady who appeared to get quite a reasonable amount of pleasure out of life, albeit that her jewels were inferior to those worn by My Lady Castlemaine. Catherine of Braganza was not nearly tragic enough for the austere tastes of our hero at that epoch. That she should have brooded apart in a gentle melancholy seemed more becoming in so ill-used a lady. Of the King himself Ned saw practically nothing in those days. He was known at Court as an appendage of Lord Clifford's

household, the latter warning him not to prate abroad about the notice that His Majesty had taken of him, as it would cause jealousy among the gentlemen at Court who had sons to place in the world. Ned accepted the situation resignedly. It was a keen disappointment to him not to be in personal attendance on the King, even as a lackey if nothing else. As it was he had to subsist on distant glimpses of his hero, and with great good luck a word or smile of recognition, not always accorded when the King was in company.

Mr. Roger Coleman was less easily silenced than his cousin. He spent two magnificent days preening himself before his associates in the light of this young relative's adoption by Royalty, and then received orders to return to London on an errand of no particular importance, at which Roger wagged his disconsolate head and hinted at the inwardness of this treatment. Barbara had been mightily struck by Mr. Roger Coleman and His Majesty had become jealous. We certainly have it recorded some ten years later that one "Mr. Coleman, an idle fellow, one of the King's gentleman pensioners," tried his lady-killing powers on Mrs. Samuel Pepys, to the great perturbation of the diarist.

When Ned had been about a fortnight in his new position, to his great joy he came across Will Throckmorton. It was at one of the balls given by Queen Catherine. Will was there in great form, bewigged and befrilled, and arrayed in the noblest of pantaloon suits. He hailed Ned with delight, and congratulated our hero on his fortunes with much heartiness and goodwill.

"And how is Wildwood?" Ned asked—"and Mistress Tyrwhit, and Miss Madge?"

"Madge is here," Will replied. "Haven't you seen her? She is in waiting on the Queen."

Ned gasped. The picture of Madge at Court was one he had only contemplated in the dream in which the adorable maiden figured as his wife, brought out of seclusion and presented to the King. "Here she is," Will went on, and the next moment a radiant lady, dressed in full Court

fashion, had stepped forward from the crowd of dancers and greeted our embarrassed hero. It was certainly Madge, but the brown home-spun and apron had been exchanged for a silken gown of due splendour. Ned, accustomed by now to the vision of fine ladies, had never seen so ravishing a picture as Margaret Tyrwhit presented at that moment, her cheeks flushed and her eyes shining with the pleasure of the meeting. Her manner was as simple and unaffected as ever, and Ned now identified it with the perfect self-possession of high-breeding—she looked every inch a great lady, for all her youth, this maid of honour.

"So you are with Lord Clifford," she said. "Does he make you write a great many letters?"

"He makes me play all day long," Ned answered. "I was not taught to play properly when I was a boy—that is the first step in my education. I am being educated."

"Have you forgotten how to wash up," the grand lady enquired.

"I sadly need another lesson," Ned replied. "Does Her Majesty spare you to the Mother now and then? This is, after all, but poor sport compared with Wildwood."

The girl's gaiety vanished for a moment. A look of longing came into her eyes. "I hope to go back soon," she said. "I only came to Court because the Queen has so few near her who—who care for her"—Ned knew what she meant. Catherine enjoyed the society of few of her co-religionists, and Margaret Tyrwhit would doubtless be a comfort to the loneliest lady in England. "My aunt wished me to come," she went on, and Ned needed no more telling of the forces that had made a lady-in-waiting of the brown-cloaked Madge of the woods.

"Are you as fond of dancing as Her Majesty appears to be?" Ned asked.

"I like it well enough," the girl answered, "but the lawn dances make me home-sick—you remember the gambols with the children?—no, you were not there long enough. I feel somehow as if you had been weeks at dear Wildwood—but," she went on, pulling herself up, "I mustn't

be home-sick. The Mother would be very severe with me if she thought I were home-sick. Maids of Honour have to be gay—especially Queen Catherine's Maids of Honour." She glanced across the gay scene. "I mustn't stop any longer," she said. Then, looking at him archly, "Will you ask me to dance with you, Mr. Coleman?" she added, audaciously. "I will throw over Will whom I am promised to, if you do." Will, standing near, laid his hand on his sword-hilt and muttered imprecations on his rival. "The mere mention of Wildwood has made us frivolous," Madge said, smiling, as they stepped out into the crowd of dancers. "You have no idea how serious I was feeling when I met you."

After all, Charles had not forgotten his protégé. About a week later he was interviewing Father Huddleston. "By the way," he said, "How goes young Coleman? How do you find him?"

"He has fine spiritual parts," the Father said, "and he seems able enough to follow the arguments of the Catholic faith, in fact he admits that they refute all other religions, but he shows no disposition to seek reception into the Church. Your Majesty may understand his attitude of mind, I confess it somewhat baffles me," the priest added, drily.

Charles meditated. "We shall have to send him back to Wildwood," he observed. "I would fain have had him inside the Church before he goes to Paris, still the good English nuns there, who are praying for me, may give him a little of their attention."

The priest made a motion with his hand. "I would that God might lead you into a right state of mind, sir," he said, "ere it is too late."

"Come!" Charles said, "*nil desperandum*, my good Father, you know that you Catholics are all praying for me. All the priests I do to death pray for me—Who knows but that this boy with the spiritual parts may be praying for me yet if I entoil him into the narrow way. Ods fish! I will send him to St. Omer for a spell with Simeon, and into Spain after that. If we keep him here

any longer he will start philandering with my other friends, and then I shall have no use for him."

"He is taking very kindly to the life," the priest said. "He is looking forward to Whitehall. The boy is full of the zest of living. I fancy he is already in love," he added, smiling.

"I'll send him to St. Omer's next week," the King said. "They will keep him clean until they have made a fanatic of him, and after that he will look after himself."

So it was arranged that Ned Coleman should complete his education abroad.

CHAPTER XI

MR. ROBERT COLEMAN stood on the threshold of Burnt Ely Manor. At his side stood Elizabeth, his wife, and his two sons, Robert and Richard. The occasion was a sufficiently dignified one. The Squire's brother, Mr. Edward Coleman, was expected at his old home, after an absence of five years, spent on the continent at the charges of His Majesty King Charles.

Ned had corresponded with his brother, and the latter had treated the correspondence with befitting respect, keeping the letters in a packet in his bureau, together with copies of his own replies, duly labelled "Correspondence with Mr. Edward Coleman, gent."

Ned's letters had been full of interesting and amusing matter. He had visited Rome and Florence, sojourned at Lisbon and Brussels, and finally settled in Paris as a clerk in the English Embassy. He had also passed some time at St. Omer's, and this latter had caused his conscientious brother much uneasiness. The famous Jesuit School was at St. Omer's, and the place, he had also heard, swarmed with Franciscan friars. Edward might easily have become popishly affected by stopping in such a place. Popery in 1669 was perhaps a shade more respectable than in the days immediately succeeding the Commonwealth. Many Papists contrived to hold office in Court, and the Duke of York himself was said to have privately accepted the religion of Anti-christ, still Robert Coleman was a sufficiently conscientious man to object to popery apart from politics, and Ned's long and effusive descriptions of the beauty of St. Peter's, and other popish churches, particularly those at Assisi, had filled his brother's heart with anxiety for his spiritual welfare. Ned was so eminently the kind that went astray on the slightest provocation.

Mr. Edward Coleman was to land at Harwich, and take in Burnt Ely on his way to London, whither he went to report himself at Court. "Will he come in a coach?" Robin had asked, "and will it have four horses?" Before the question could be answered there had been a clatter of horse's hoofs up the drive, and, hurrying out, the squire and family had formed the little welcoming group that Ned saw as he rode up, in much the same fashion as he had done when, five years ago, he rode home from Cambridge. No serving-man was at hand to assist the visitor to dismount, as would have befitted the occasion, but, before it could be prevented, Arabella Miriam, less attractive than ever, a very impersonation of low comedy, had darted out and caught hold of the stirrup, causing the horse to rear in protest. There followed a kind of circus performance, Miriam retreating precipitately, not from the uplifted hoofs, which she faced with valour of a constable of later days stopping runaway traffic, but in answer to a sharp command from her master. All the dignity had been successfully abstracted from the situation.

In spite of contact with royalty Ned was much the same, still a stripling in appearance, and as eager and boyish as ever.

"We thought you would come in a coach with four horses," Robin said, carefully phrasing his speech to avoid the "thee and thou" of the puritan idiom which had obtained at Burnt Ely of yore.

"Mr. Treasurer doesn't lend his coach to the whipping boy," Ned laughed, "and I'm not even whipping boy-in-chief. I'm only under-sec."

"What is that?" Dick asked, with vivid interest.

"I get whipped for what the over-sec. does," Ned explained, "and the over-sec. gets whipped for Sir Thomas."

"And is Sir Thomas whipped when the King is naughty?" Dick went on, with his old habit of getting at bed-rock.

"Tush, sir, don't talk nonsense to your uncle," Robert said; and Mr. Edward Coleman was conducted to the house with all due ceremony, having audaciously blown a

kiss to Arabella Miriam, who stood, abashed but happy, at a little distance off watching the hero's reception with a beaming countenance.

Never had the Burnt Ely household listened to such strange stories as those with which the visitor regaled it that night. Stories of courts and courtiers, of Italians and Spaniards, and of the strange and amazing things eaten in Italy and Spain. Ned described some of the churches with an enthusiasm for their religious ceremonial, as well as for their architecture, that disquieted his brother, flashing out a spirited defence when the latter commented on the idolatry practised in such places.

"Well, well," Elizabeth interpolated, anxious to pour oil on the troubled waters, "think of the things they eat, as Ned hath told us. How could one expect them to be Christians? And their languages, too—The wonder is that they remain human beings!"

"Edward," Robert Coleman said to his brother that night before they retired to bed, "I trust that thou art not affected towards popery?"

"One may speak in defence of a religious system without belonging to it," Ned answered.—He had reddened under his brother's gaze.—"But take comfort, Robert, I have lived for five years among papists, and I am still where I was. I am a member of the English Church."

"Heaven be praised!" Robert said, piously. "I had almost feared that you had become a Catholic in those evil parts."

Ned opened his mouth and shut it again. He was about to say "I am a Catholic!" but he despaired of making clear that sophisticated point to his simple-minded brother, so he wisely withheld.

"Well, I pray the danger be past," Robert said. "If they didn't capture thee with their fripperies and fineries over there where they have the ruling, they have naught to try on thee here in Christian England. We hanged a priest at Ipswich last week for saying Mass in a filthy garret, and the very cup he used for his superstitious mummary was of common metal, so there is naught here

to tempt thee. They have no fripperies in England, these papists, wherewith to tempt a man. Well, good night to thee, Edward, we have been mighty well entertained by thy stories."

"And yet," Ned said, "I never told you the most wonderful of all—about the catacombs at Rome. It went right out of my head till now!"

The next morning Ned pursued his journey to town. His baggage, had preceded him, and he rode unattended. He was expected at the lodging of Sir Thomas Clifford, in the vicinity of Whitehall, where he would report himself, and learn the particular nature of the duties that would henceforth be his.

It was getting towards the end of July, and a gorgeous summer day. Ned felt all the joy of a returned exile. Good old England! Where, after all, was the country to match her? It was fine, indeed, to think that he was on his way to become the servant of his country.

At this stage of his career Edward Coleman was convinced that the Secretaryship of State was his final destination, and that it was his high vocation to set things straight in this parliament-ridden England. He would deliver the King from the miserable system which made him a monarch in name only. The King was still Ned's hero. The thought that he was soon to see him was intoxicating. Never was there a more glorious progress than that ride from Burnt Ely to Whitehall. He changed horses and reached London the same evening. On this occasion he had no Mr. Tom Rich to proffer advice, but Ned Coleman in his travels had become a man of the world. He saw the Tower lying to his left as he entered the city—that house of correction for disgraced politicians. My Lord Shaftesbury himself had been there. Ned wondered if the King's enemies would ever hanker after seeing him, Mr. Coleman, immured within its walls. He remembered hearing someone once tell him how they had seen the words "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life" engraved on the walls of one of its dungeons. He felt a thrill through his heart. What a

glorious adventure life was, and what a magnificent thing to be true till death!—of the crown of life Ned Coleman had no very definite ideas, but he was young, and the moment was all-absorbing.

One other thing was ever present in his mind. I am not sure that it did not come in front of his patriotic thrills. It was the memory of Mistress Margaret Tyrwhit. Queen Catherine's Court was in London. Would Mistress Margaret be still in attendance on Her Majesty? For five years he had heard no word of Wildwood or its inmates, except on one occasion when he had met Will Throckmorton in Paris and received news of the quaint Franciscan household. The Mother, Will had told him then, was as truculent as ever—she was wearing the magistrates thin. Madge? Oh, Madge was growing a mighty fine lady at Court—a disquieting statement that gave Ned the melancholies for days after. He bitterly regretted that he had not craved leave to correspond with Mistress Madge—he rather liked himself as a letter-writer—one can say mighty audacious things in a letter.

Our hero reached Sir Thomas Clifford's lodgings at Whitehall soon after sunset. Mr. Treasurer was immersed in work, but he gave his "clerk" a kindly welcome enough. "I will tell His Majesty that you have returned," he said. "It may be that he will remember you." "No, Mrs. Tyrwhit was not in waiting on the Queen, Her Majesty had sent her into the country."

Mr. Treasurer surveyed his clerk with a not unkindly twinkle in his eye. Ned had always liked his chief, and now he felt a new interest in him, inasmuch as people were saying that the Treasurer was "warping towards Rome." Rome had a fascination for Ned. He had learned to love her ceremonies and also to understand her doctrines. He was disappointed to find his host extremely reticent on the subject of religion, for he delighted in discoursing on the points in ceremony and ritual in which he had become an expert. It was a distinct grievance to Edward Coleman that political and other reasons prevented Englishmen from belonging to the Roman Catholic

Church—the Church of England being a poor make-shift. The logic of Rome's teaching had appealed to his orderly mind, as well as the beauty of her ritual. After Ned had paid a visit to the Chapel Royal and experienced a sermon by Dr. So-and-so on the perils of idolatry, following a dreary evensong, he pitied himself heartily for the awkward necessity which made him a member of the Reformed Church of England. The solacing doctrines of the Caroline divine who had shown the Church of England to be a true portion of the Catholic Church gave him but poor comfort. Ned on the whole felt mightily sorry for himself.

He became possessed of an overweening desire to visit Wildwood. The significance of the little garret chapel he had now learnt to understand. Catholic devotion was no longer a thing incomprehensible to him. At St. Omer's he had frequently attended "Salut;" the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament possessed a meaning for him, and he had grown to love the simple expression of faith in lands which had remained faithful to Catholic worship. He longed to take his part intelligently in those devotions, moreover, he had a growing anxiety to show the household at Wildwood that he was no longer the "outsider" that he had been on the previous occasion. At St. Omer's he had conversed with the theologians, and his agile wits had fully grasped the points of their arguments. It was only when the theologians submitted to him the proposition that he should embrace the religion whose reasonableness so delighted his intellect that the young man with the agile wits found excellent reasons for remaining where circumstances had placed him.

It was a whole week before Ned had an interview with the King, and then it was more or less accidental.

"By the way," Charles said to Mr. Treasurer, interrupting some appalling dull treasury business anent the Dutch war, "Have you got that young man Coleman with you? Send him along to me one day to look at!"

This led to Ned's being presented to his sovereign at Whitehall on the following day.

Charles greeted his protégé with careless kindness. Ned, who had counted on this hour through the years of his wanderings, was scarcely less nervous than on the previous occasion. The king asked him various questions as to his life in Paris. "And I suppose they've made a papist of you?" he remarked, banteringly.

Ned flushed and drew himself up. "I am still a member of the Church of which your Majesty is the head," he answered. It was quite a well-put reply.

"I thought that everyone who went to Italy turned a papist," the king said, "except Mr. Evelyn, and he'd have done it only he has a creed beginning, 'I believe in John Evelyn,' and he didn't want to substitute the Pope. I suppose you said, 'I believe in Charles, King of England?'"

"I intend to be loyal to the Church of my country," Ned responded. "There is much beauty in the Catholic religion, but it is not for your Majesty's subjects. The Catholic Church in England is the Church of which your Majesty is the supreme governor."

Edward Coleman's hero regarded him with a curling lip. "You are as loyal to the Crown as ever," he remarked. "The Parliament may find you really expensive to buy. You've learned the trick of making speeches anyhow. Ods fish! I shouldn't wonder if you came to be as big a bore as Bennet. Get my Lord Arlington to give you some lessons."

Ned retired from his longed for interview rather badly snubbed. He felt that he had somehow failed to please his Majesty. One consolation was, things would have been much worse if he had had to own up to an intention towards turning papist.

The king sent for Father Huddleston later in the day. The Benedictine was attached to the Queen's household at Somerset House.

"Your theologians haven't captured young Coleman," he said, curtly.

"I have spoken with him," the priest answered, "and he perfectly comprehends the doctrines of the Church, and is

well disposed towards it, but like many, alas! he feels no direct call to submit himself to the Roman obedience."

The king's countenance assumed its most sinister expression. "That's just the kind of man I have no use for," he observed. "A hedger—a trimmer. What I require is a fanatic who will serve my body for the sake of my soul. This boy would serve me for my own sake—till he tires of his fad. I want a fool who will serve me for God's sake—his fad sticks."

"He is a generous soul," the Father answered. "The light will come to him," he added with gentle conviction.

The king deliberated. The priest watched the spectacle of his Majesty giving himself to think.

"We must send him to Wildwood," he said, at last. "Your theologians have failed. We must try Wildwood."

"Your Majesty would appeal to the emotions," the priest observed.

"'Tis the final appeal," Charles answered. "Your Jesuits have gained his head. Let the woman gain his heart for the cause you believe in."

The old priest's patience suddenly exhausted itself.

"'Tis a marvel to me," he said, with considerate warmth, "how you can allow that worthy woman to be persecuted as she is. A royal word could stop it."

Charles grinned widely, if so vulgar a term may be applied to royalty. He enjoyed getting a rise out of these self-controlled priests—it was not easy, as a rule. He fully forgave the father his freedom of speech.

"She likes it," he replied, with characteristic impudence. "Don't you Catholics envy your martyrs? Martyrdom is to that woman what a jewelled necklace is to Nelly. I don't forbid Nellie her gewgaws!"

"Now contrariwise, Father," he went on gaily, "if I interfere I make a martyr of myself, for Shaftesbury keeps a keen eye on Wildwood—he has a whole book of fables about its dark doings ready to publish, and he is only waiting for me to show signs of favouring the lady to land me in a deuced inconvenient mess. Now, Sir, martyrdom can bring me no reward in the next world for the simple

reason that I have no next world, whereas Mistress Tyrwhit has. Come, now, apply your logic to that hypothesis, my good Father."

"Nay, you wrong yourself, Sir," the priest said, shaking his head. "The least ignoble thing in that proposition of yours was the unbelief—if it be sincere"—he surveyed the king shrewdly. "I pray that even now your Majesty may be in good faith."

"Well, Father, remember this," Charles said, "The Stuarts were never hypocrites—with all our vices we are not that. I should never pose as an unbeliever unless I had the right to, be satisfied of that! And now," he went on, "see that that young man goes to Wildwood. Tell Clifford to see to it."

"It will be difficult to manage." Father Huddleston answered, dubiously. "The place is being watched, and they are cautious as to their visitors."

"It's got to be managed," the king retorted, thrusting out his underlip; the priest recognised the tone—"I tell you I won't be served by trimmers."

CHAPTER XII

NED fitted easily into his new surroundings. He found himself on the secretarial Staff of the Treasury, and his duties were familiar enough, being much the same as those that had been his in Paris. Sir Thomas kept an eye on his clerks, but this, again, Ned was used to. He had been well overseered during his sojourn abroad—first by Father Simeon, and later by a gentleman of the French Court who had been his travelling tutor, so to speak, and whose morals were as strict as those of his own brother Robert. Ned had, in fact, been kept well out of mischief!

The gay life of London was, in a way, a novelty to our hero. All the political gossip was to be heard in the Treasurer's house. Sir Thomas's friends were rather amusing folk. Ned made the acquaintance of Mr. Samuel Pepys, a clerk in the admiralty, and discovered he knew Mr. Creed, the gentleman who had befriended him so kindly on his first visit to the metropolis. Ned did not feel greatly drawn to Mr. Pepys, the little man had a way of repeating unsavoury scandals with a zest that by no means appealed to the young man with ideals. He hoped sincerely that Mistress Madge had not come into contact with the ladies who provoked the admiration of Mr. Pepys. He thought of Margaret in these days as a grand and dignified lady with Court manners and Court tastes. Wildwood was a sweet and fragrant memory of the past. It had haunted him through his travels. Assisi had in quite a strange way reawakened its memory. The brown Franciscan fathers and nuns, and the sweet Franciscan

atmosphere had been peculiarly like that which lent its subtle charm to the Sussex homestead.

It all seemed dreamlike and remote in this noisy, sophisticated London. Assisi and the little wooden "bottom" in the Sussex hills existed alike on another plane—in a world where the light was that which never was on sea or land.

Nevertheless the busy town life was full of interest and excitement. Our hero was uncommonly pleased with himself, and others, it seemed, were pleased with him, for he had no difficulty in making friends on all sides. Ned Coleman was certainly destined to be a favourite among his associates.

Within a very few days of the King's interview with Father Huddleston, Ned had the good fortune to run up against William Throckmorton. Perhaps this is not a very accurate way of putting it. It happened thus:—The reverend Father Simeon, under whose tutelage Ned had visited St Omer and other places, being one of the popish priests who had, in common parlance, the run of Whitehall, happened to come across Mr. Throckmorton in the Mall, and brought him to call on Lord Clifford—Will being lately returned from Tilbury, be it understood, with news of the Fleet. The two friends were thus brought together. Ned was overwhelmed with delight at the meeting and made eager enquiries after Wildwood and its inmates.

"You should ride over to Groombridge and pay your respects to Mistress Tyrwhit," the padre suggested demurely to young Mr. Coleman.

"Why not?" Will echoed.

"Does Mistress Tyrwhit no longer forbid me the house?" Ned asked.

Will and Father Simeon exchanged a glance—in the case of the layman there was certainly a wink.

"She would hardly turn you away," Will said, "and she would be mightily interested to hear about Assisi. We are as Franciscan as ever at Wildwood. Brother Giles is most vigorous and Waggeboney *sem per florcat*."

"I should have to get leave of absence," Ned replied, "and I have only just started on my duties." He heaved a wistful sigh.

"Margaret Tyrwhit is down there," Will observed.

Things arranged themselves remarkably luckily for Ned. He really might have mistaken himself for the spoiled child of Fortune, for the very next day Mr. Treasurer found it necessary to send a messenger to a certain member of Parliament who was taking the waters at Tunbridge Wells, and he singled out young Coleman as a suitable emissary. Ned accordingly found himself transferred to the retinue of Lord Arundel who was moving out of town to the Wells. His instructions were to remain in the neighbourhood and convey the parliament man's reply to the Treasurer when certain negotiations had made it forthcoming. "It will be a matter of a day or two," Lord Clifford said, "so if you have any friends there about you can pay them a visit."

So it was that Edward Coleman set out for Sussex a second time, rolling over London Bridge in a coach and four in really fine style.

The occasion for paying his state visit to the Notorious Lady presented itself within a day or two of his arrival at the Wells. The business with the M.P., a sordid person whose political views required mellowing by certain financial methods considered legitimate in those days even by the most fastidious moralists, adjusted itself so far as to leave the agent free to go his own way for the time being.

According, one fine afternoon, Mr. Coleman chartered a steed to bear him on his journey over the hills. A coach and four would not have been in keeping with the spirit of Holy Poverty that prevailed at Wildwood. He wore his brown taffatas suit—he cut a neat figure in brown taffatas. Mistress Madge would surely approve of him in this garb. No, he would not wear a periwig, that, also, would not fit in with the spirit of the place. He hoped, though, that Mistress Madge would realise that he did wear a periwig on occasions—a mighty expensive item in a man's outfit, and a sign of social eminence. The fact cannot be denied

that he was feeling exceedingly pleased with himself. The lady of Wildwood on this occasion, he felt, would welcome him as a kindred spirit, for had he not learned the beauty and inwardness of the Catholic worship during his sojourn abroad? He could now take his part intelligently in the mysterious rites that had so strangely attracted him. He had the whole ceremony on his finger-tips, as it were. He had become familiar with the Divine Office. Altogether Mr. Coleman felt that he could not fail to be *persona grata* at the home of the champion of the proscribed religion.

Driving in a coach and four is all very well, but one cannot come into touch with Nature travelling under such banal conditions. As Ned rode across the Downs, clad in brown taffetas, with white ruffles and brown riding-cloak, his black curly hair framed by a lesser plumed hat—his best was made to fit over a periwig—life had never seemed so exquisite—the world so glorious a place to live in. It was a perfect day. From the hill-top round which the road wound he could see the wooded valley in which the home of the out-law lady discreetly hid itself, and the forest beyond, climbing up the opposite hill-side. There was no longer the variety of hue that had given the hills a coat of many shaded colour on the former occasion; the clamour of the birds, too, was missing. Nature was in a less mystic mood on this late July day, but everything was glorious and eminently satisfactory. In the place of the wild sense of freedom, he possessed a consciousness of wearing golden fetters—the fetters of service to his country—they weighed but lightly, and lent a certain dignity to their wearer. The song of Jacopone was not on his lips on this occasion, but the thought that he could discuss Assisi as an eye-witness with the Lady of Wildwood filled him with intense satisfaction. He had assuredly become a true Franciscan! “What a young pagan they must have thought me,” Edward Coleman, traveller, told himself. “I remember I could not so much as follow the grace at table!” A seasonable gravity, as opposed to an unbecoming levity, settled on Mr. Coleman

as he approached the woodland ride that led to the coy residence of the lady recusant. Edward Coleman felt it incumbent on him to mount on the right spiritual plane ere he encountered the chatelaine of the little semi-religious community where so much time was given to those same sacred offices so efficiently carried out in St Peter's at Rome, and St Mark's at Venice. In the woodland road he met a sour-visaged individual riding away from the direction of Wildwood, who treated Ned to an inquisitive stare as he rode past him. Mr. Coleman wondered what his business had been at Wildwood. It is possible that the woods were still enchanted, but their spell failed to penetrate the spirit of grave decorum which possessed Mr. Edward Coleman. Nevertheless there was a joy in his heart as he neared the spot which he had visited but once before five years since which was distinct in itself, apart from the consideration that he was in all probability to see the lady who was the object of his affections—Sweet Madge Tyrwhit, or rather, Mistress Margaret Trywhit, lady-in-waiting to her majesty.

Ned was very near to bursting into song when the old red-tiled roof finally broke up on his view. He rode up the narrow green lane that led to the entrance and was met by old Robin. The latter recognised Ned and welcomed him in the friendliest fashion, to his great gratification. The Mother, he told Ned, was in the hayfield teaching the children their lessons. "May I go and find her?" the visitor asked. A little side gate led out into the meadow, and a shout of childish laughter guided Ned to a corner where a little group of children were gathered. Lesson-books had been thrown down on the hay and in the midst of the group was the slight brown figure of the Mother. She held a skipping-rope and was engaged in skipping for all she was worth while the delighted children counted aloud and clapped their hands in glee.

The performance came to an end with the customary abruptness, and the performer, flushed and out of breath, threw down the rope. She caught sight of the new-comer, but was by no means embarrassed, for all his distinguished

appearance. "Well, this is nice of you, Mr. Coleman," she said, advancing with outstretched hand—she had recognised him at once, like old Robin. "I remember you? Of course I do, Brother Ned! The children and I are having games—we were doing lessons but we were disturbed by such a very disagreeable person just now, that we felt we needed a game after his visit. He came from the Magistrate."

"Then I hope my interruption will make you want to get back to lessons," Ned said, "or I shall feel a disagreeable person too. May I teach someone her ABC?" He had come off "the spiritual plane" rather precipitately. The children looked slightly alarmed. Mistress Tyrwhit smiled her bright smile. "You will sit in the hay and talk to me and tell me all about yourself," she said, in the well-remembered manner, and Mr. Coleman sat down in his brown taffetas and lesser plumed hat on a pile of sweet-scented hay. Mistress Trywhit seated herself at his side. "You are looking much the same, Mr. Coleman," she said, "do you ever mean to really grow up?" It gave Mr. Coleman his chance to be impudent in return.

"I am still Franciscan," he said, "you see I am all in brown—I hope you approve of my 'habit'?"

The Mother ran her eye over him and tightened her lips. "You are too fashionable," she said.

"I've got a periwig at home," Mr. Coleman retorted defiantly, and so they chatted on, leaving the bantering tone behind them, Ned telling her all about his travels, his visit to Assisi, and his sojourn at St Omer's and many things calculated to interest her. The notorious lady listened, with her thoughtful eyes fixed on him. She had the gift of listening in the highest degree. When he paused, after a long and most enjoyable recital, she made her comment. "And you are still outside the Church?" she said.

"I hope not," Mr. Coleman replied, clearing his throat by an inaudible process. "I have yet to realize that I am excluded from the Catholic Church by remaining in the church of my fathers." The lady made no comment.

Ned wondered what she was thinking. He had an uncomfortable feeling that he had ceased to interest her. She turned the conversation quietly on to other topics.

"Margaret is staying here," she said, "and John Mitton—You will remember John Mitton, he is very devoted to Phyllis still." Ned remembered John as a very stolid boy with a steadfast leaning towards Phyllis as a playfellow. He had rather liked John. "There are several others, too, we are quite a large party. Mr. Ironmonger is here and he is going to say Mass to-morrow morning. We have not been able to have Mass lately—the magistrates are very alert, but we have decided to risk it to-night." She spoke quite naturally, as though assured of his sympathy and approval. "I hope this will not prevent you stopping the night with us," she said. "You will be quite safe, in any case as you are not a Catholic." The full, expressive voice trailed off into a tone that conveyed many things. For the first time Ned realised to the full that remaining in "the Church of his fathers" had its worldly compensations—the extreme prudence of his theological position was brought home to him in its fullness. The lady of the skipping rope, with the native dignity that defied environment, had become a queenly hostess, seated there in the hay, yet she had given him to understand that her fullest hospitality was not for him—she could not extend to him the hazard of the secret worship. Mr. Coleman felt that circumstances prevented him from becoming one of the privileged guests of this hospitable house. He would be in no kind of danger. He would be "quite safe."

The children had been playing at a little distance off. At this moment they raised a shout and started to scamper across the meadow. Ned's heart gave a great bound. "Here comes Madge," the Mother said. Yes, it was indeed Madge! Madge garbed once more in russet brown and wearing a dainty white apron. Frills and furbelows and powder discarded—the Madge of his first vision! He sprang to his feet and hastened to greet her. Oh, this was good indeed! The other's delight was equally

evident. "Will told us you were home again," Madge said, "and we did hope you would come and see us."

"You are out of school, too," Ned laughed. Wildwood once more stood within a fairy circle and all outside it was school. All Mr. Coleman's dignified potentialities dropped from him as at the wave of a magic wand. "I'm out of school for three whole days at least."

The Mother sat watching them with quiet enjoyment. "And are you glad not to have to dance to order?" Ned asked. "Does her Majesty still love dancing?" "I love it," the young lady replied, and seizing one of the children, she executed a fandango on the spot.

"Madge!" the Mother said, reprovingly, "you will shock Mr. Coleman. He is not at all frivolous, he is a secretary of state."

"I wonder how Her Majesty would like that kind of dance?" Ned commented.

"Queen Catherine will dance into Heaven," Mistress Tyrwhit said, she was grave now—"her gaiety is the bravest sight in England. Our Queen is a very grand woman."

They moved on towards the house. Ned found that it was taken as a matter of course that he would lie at Wildwood that night at least. As they approached the rambling old dwelling he remarked a certain air about in that denoted hard times. The place was out of repair and almost forlorn-looking. The Lady Poverty was in a somewhat graver mood than of yore. "We still have a few children," the Mother said, "but we are too poor nowadays to have very many guests." Ned felt a trifle uncomfortable. He knew that it was the constant paying of fines that depleted the notorious lady's purse, and he felt vaguely responsible for the magistracy of England. Inside the house, however, the atmosphere was as gay and cheery as ever. There was quite a large house-party of young men and maidens—the latter a particularly merry crew, who accepted Ned in the same unaffected spirit of comradeship on the former occasion. Once again, Ned found himself that had made Wildwood so delightful a place to play in

a member of a large family, linked in some bond of kinship that made everybody "most uncommon kind." Mr. Ironmonger was delighted to welcome him. He had grown somewhat thin and haggard-looking, but he was as gay as ever. Ned thought he had never seen a more attractive face than Mr. Ironmonger's, but the charm was subtle, like the charm of the place itself.

CHAPTER XIII

NED found no change in the régime of the quaint household. There was the children's supper in the long kitchen. It was as merry a crew as ever. Blind Peter, now a biggish boy, was among them, and there were one or two puny little objects whose absolute lack of attractiveness had made a direct appeal to the tender heart of their benefactor. Mistress Tyrwhit had certainly been out into the highways and hedges for her guests.

But if this applied to the juvenile portion, the contrary was the case with the grown-ups. Clare Tyrwhit selected her helpers with a fastidious discrimination. Ned was aware that no greater compliment could have been paid to him than his inclusion in this circle. The clearing-up followed the children's meal, as before. There was a large number of workers on this occasion. "You are not at all necessary," the Mother told Ned, "but I shall set you to work on principle, because you are a secretary of state, and not a mendicant. You shall *wash* this time."

So Mr. Coleman turned his cambric ruffles back and washed with the best possible grace, for was not Mistress Madge wiping? Washing was a serious business, however, it was the gravest mistake not to take Wildwood seriously. When a platter slipped through Ned's hands and fell upon the stone floor, with direful results, he had thought to treat it as a joke, but the Mother's severity was perfectly genuine. She shook her head. "You will never make a statesman," she said, "you are too clumsy—or else you were not taking pains." The latter indictment was particularly severe. The embryo statesman was about to be abashed when the lady of Wildwood wiped the incident

away with a smile, short-lived but monstrous effective. Nevertheless, Ned remembered that he had been scolded, and applied himself to his task with greater sobriety.

When his duty was over he found himself handed over to John Mitton, a large, not very entertaining youth, with a remarkably honest face.

John was a simple soul, and Ned learned much from him about his fellow-guests. Most of the young ladies, he learned to his astonishment, were destined to the cloister. Not all, indeed, Phyllis, for instance, John told Ned, had promised to marry him—the devoted John. Ned, with a horrid numbness at his heart, longed to ask if Mistress Madge was among these who had the religious vocation, but he could not bring himself to frame the question. In his mind, however, he connected the gentle air of gravity that sat so charmingly on Madge, in her unaffected simplicity, with a destiny remote from the court circles, where she had figured so brilliantly, and yet so incongruously. He compared her in his mind with Mistress Rose, with her lively sallies of wit and breezy animal spirits, and he retained no doubt but that Mistress Margaret Tyrwhit had passed beyond the reach of his wildest dreams. The ground seemed to have slipped away from under his feet. He felt unreasonably angry with honest John Mitton, whose conversation dwindled now that Ned had ceased to help him on with it. Mr. Coleman had become very quiet.

“Will there be Salut, to-night?” he asked suddenly. He had not been able to indulge in Salut since his return to England, and he had become greatly attached to the devotion which he had first become acquainted with at Wildwood. John shook his head. It was no longer safe to reserve the Blessed Sacrament, he told Ned. Only recently the sacred vessels and vestments had been seized as Popish tomfoolery by the sudden visitors who raided Wildwood periodically. There was to be Mass at dawn to-morrow, but Mr. Ironmonger would use his own altar stone and an old metal chalice used by one of Elizabethan martyrs, which he had brought from his mother’s house in London. Ned felt dimly uncomfortable during this artless

recital. John evidently took him for a papist, and Mr. Coleman told himself that being a Catholic, to wit, an English Catholic, the ethical necessity did not exist for informing Master Mitton of his exact position. He was glad to rejoin the others—this ingenuous boy did not represent the religion of Wildwood, as he wished to see it after sharing the hospitality of the Roman Catholic Church, so far as worship and ceremony were concerned, for five years; he gave it an association with that vulgar thing called popery, practised in England by a fanatical sect.

The evening meal brought the guests together. Everyone present treated Ned in the friendliest fashion. The "outside" feeling that John Mitton's misconception had produced wore off as he discoursed on his travels in Italy, and described it in the glowing colours in which he loved to paint it. He was enthusiastic over the music at the churches in Paris. Mr. Ironmonger, by way of returning the compliment, remarked that he had heard that the music in the King's Chapel Royal at St. James's was also very fine. Ned found himself wishing that the compliment had not been returned. The transition to the Protestant Chapel Royal affected him somewhat unpleasantly. He reverted to the beauties of St. Peter's at Rome, and was immensely gratified to find that he knew the correct names of the vestments worn by the clergy, where John Mitton declared that he had not so much as heard of them.

"I think you had better serve at Mass instead of John," Mr. Ironmonger said, drily. "You are evidently better instructed, Mr. Coleman, and you would run less risk, not being a Catholic." For a second time Mr. Coleman found that his adherence to what he termed the Church of his fathers was likely to prove of some service to him.

The Mother had watched him with her grave eyes full of thought.

"Mr. Coleman will assist at Mass, even if he doesn't serve," she said.

Mr. Ironmonger pursed up his lips, but he said nothing.

"Mass is at daybreak," Mistress Tyrwhit said to Ned as

she bade him good-night. "You shall be called in good time."

It was already dawn when Ned was awakened out of a deep sleep and dreams, of Madge, enthroned on a pedestal, Madonna-like and well out of his reach, by a tapping at his door. He dressed in haste, lamenting the absence of the finely-bound Latin missal which discretion had bade him leave behind in Paris, since the possession of such things in England led to complications. He made his way along the gallery and up the crooked staircase behind a concealed door and found himself in the corridor under the eaves leading to the chapel. He remembered the Mother's remark about the gate of Heaven as he stooped to pass through the low doorway.

How he was looking forward to this Mass. It would resemble, he told himself, the village Mass he had assisted at in a tiny church near Assisi, for of course it would be simple. He was hardly prepared, however, for what met his eye as he entered the garret chapel. Bare and unadorned it had always been, but now he looked around in bewilderment. There was no sign of an altar. Most of the guests had assembled, but there was no benches to accommodate them. Presently Mr. Ironmonger appeared from the door in the panel at the end of the room. He was wearing an appallingly shabby and remarkably undersized vestment. In his hands he carried the wherewithal for celebrating Mass in times of persecution. A small piece of stone, marked with five scratches, representing, as Ned did not need to be told, the five wounds of Christ, and two small battered vessels of discoloured metal. Ned then noticed that the Mother had spread a spotless white cloth on a narrow table that John Mitton had set in position against the wall. She also hung a wooden crucifix over it, and lighted a taper at each end.

The company knelt down as the priest entered. He set the sacred vessels on the improvised altar, John Mitton stepped forward to serve. And so Mass began, Ned's first Mass in England.

It was most certainly the Mass, but oh, the contrast

even to the village Mass in Italy ! There, there had been the altar with its tawdry yet symbolic decorations, and the sacred vessels had been worthy receptacles. Here there was nothing to tell the outward eye that the Church's prodigious Act of Worship was being celebrated. Ned contrasted it with St. Peter's at Rome ! Yet it was most certainly the Mass. Something gripped at Ned's heart as he gazed at the narrow table and the two lighted tapers. This Mass at Wildwood was going to be a very tremendous function.

The celebrant said Mass swiftly and audibly, breathing out the words as though with his very soul, and Ned, kneeling there, made the discovery that he was no longer "enjoying" hearing Mass. He fixed his eyes on the dented ciborium and felt, as he had never felt before, an intruder, an outsider, one who did not possess the right to risk his liberty, to make his sacrifice in union with that now being offered on this pitiful altar in furtive secrecy.

At the Offertory, just as the priest was lifting the martyr's pewter cup above his head with the words, *Suscipe, Domine*, there broke on the silence a sound in the far distance. The sound of horses' hoofs. There was just a perceptible quickening in the priest's tones. A little quick-drawn breath from Madge, near to whom Ned was kneeling.

She lifted her face out of her hands and listened.

The celebrant passed rapidly on to the Preface. He breathed rather than uttered the prescribed words——

"Therefore with the angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven"——

The riders were approaching nearer. Ned glanced at the Mother. The Notorious Lady was kneeling upright ; her hands clasped before her ; her eyes burning like live coals in the thin, calm face. They were fixed on the bowed figure of the priest. He had arrived at the words of consecration :

"Sanctus ! Sanctus ! Sanctus ! Dominus Deus Sabaoth !"

There was no sacring bell—that had been dispensed with

among other accessories, but as the priest pronounced the words, the door bell rang with a loud clang. Old Robin slipped quietly out of his seat. He would know how to deal with the visitors. All this had happened before. But to Ned it was new and unspeakably thrilling. He realised the danger threatening the worshippers and also the safety of his own position. He alone of that little band sat secure, as it were, in his own ungenerosity. These persecutors who approached might indeed be honest men, if in error—their very hatred of the Mass might have something big about it, but there was a self-made littleness about his own position—the sympathetic onlooker who avoided all risks. Ned bowed his head with the others in shame as well as in worship, as the priest elevated the Host.

There was a short silence. Then the door-bell clanged again, peremptorily, as the priest lifted the chalice above his head. Strangely the "Sacring bell" synchronised with the showing of the Mystery. Ned raised his head. The tears were in his eyes, and a great humiliation in his heart. "My Lord and my God!" he murmured. And, like something warm and stinging flowing through his veins, he felt the words of St. Ignatius:— "*Sanguis Christi, inebria me!*"

Still the swift, calm voice continued the Mass—words pronounced reverently, yet with the rapidity of thought. Robin had at length admitted the strangers, but the door leading up the crooked stairway was bolted from within and would take some breaking through. The priest was making his Communion. "*Domine non sum dignus!*"

The little congregation rose and ranged itself kneeling in a semicircle round the little altar. The priest turned to them with the battered ciborium in his hand. He held up a precious sample of its Contents:—

"*Ecce agnus Dei!*"

Swiftly he went from one to the other. All present communicated except Ned. He knelt motionless, watching with bright eyes, and with a strange new hunger in his heart. The priest reached the last communicant. He repeated the words. "*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu*

Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam." Then he glanced up at Ned, thinking that one of their own had held back——

"Open in the King's name!"

The searchers were knocking at the door below. "Open in the King's name," a voice demanded in Ned's heart. "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

In a moment an amazing transformation was effected. When Ned lifted his face from his hands the last of the little congregation was filing through an aperture in the panelling on the opposite side to that from which the priest had entered. The latter had collected the sacred vessels and accessories and was making for his own hiding hole. Only the Mother and Ned remained. She touched him gently on the shoulder.

"Go with the others, Mr. Coleman," she whispered. "It will be better, although there is no danger as you are not a Catholic."

There was nothing in her tone save the courteous anxiety of a hostess for the well-being of her guest, but Ned felt the sting of the unconscious reproach as he had never felt it before. He met her gaze steadily. "I follow the priest," he said, "and by the mercy of God, when they catch me I shall be a Papist."

He had no time to wait and watch her joy. He just caught the radiance of her smile as he turned and made a dash after the retreating figure of William Ironmonger. The Mother stayed behind. She had cut it too fine. The magistrate and his merry men had already effected an entrance, and in the denuded chamber, alleged to be used as a popish chapel, they found the Mistress of the house standing, with shining eyes and wearing an expression that gave an unearthly beauty to the seamed and toil-worn face.

The lady's presence was sufficient evidence that the chapel had recently been used for improper purposes. She had had lingered to say a "*Deo gratias!*" and so betrayed herself to the enemy. And it was all Ned Coleman's doing.

From his side of the panel Ned listened to what was taking place. He heard the stringent tones of the officer saying :—" I arrest you, Madam, in the King's name for harbouring a Massing priest and causing him to say Mass."

" Have you then found a priest in my house ? " the calm voice of the lady enquired.

" If we find him or no," the magistrate replied, " we hold our warrant to arrest you and bear you to jail. His Majesty has tired of his clemency to one who treats him so contumaciously, making mock of his laws and insulting his leniency to a woman by these reiterated acts of sedition. His Majesty is determined that you, though a woman, shall be made an example to other females who think to defy the law of God and man, and go free by virtue of their sex."

It was a fine long speech. Ned longed to kick the man who made it. He could picture the Mother's face as she listened. He heard the ready answer, given in the quick, perfectly agreeable manner that she had with disputants.

" I have yet to learn that a woman can be condemned without proof of guilt. I must remind you, Sir, that you have found no priest in my house, nor can any man convict me of sedition."

The magistrate snorted. " Your priest has escaped through yonder rabbit hole," he said, " I perceive that he has not been clever enough to close the door after him." Ned guessed that he was pointing to the door through which the others had fled, which led to a postern entrance to the house, and also, through a concealed opening on the staircase, to the lower gallery where the guest-chambers were situated. The guests by now would be safely in bed.

The pursuers had been put nicely off the scent by this oversight on the part of the pursued. Ned imagined the Mother's covert enjoyment of the unpremeditated ruse. Her gallant heart delighted in this kind of drama. There was that of the child in the lady of Wildwood which rejoiced in a game of play in which Michael and his angels took part. She was assuredly, even at this pass, no object of pity for the onlooker !

"You will be pleased to prepare to accompany me," the magistrate said. "You will be taken to my house and sent from thence to Lewes jail to take your trial at the assizes for high treason, and let me warn you that we have serious evidence against you, and," he added, with ominous impressiveness, "may God have mercy on your soul."

So it was that the notorious Lady of Wildwood was arrested in the name of the King who had acclaimed her, bareheaded, "a Queen among women."

CHAPTER XIV

NED was seized with the fierce desire to dash out from his place of concealment and protect the defenceless lady, but he knew that his hiding-place contained, in the "hole" at the foot of the long dark stair, another whose very life was at hazard. He bit his lips in the anguish of his soul, and restrained himself. He heard them move away. "I will not detain you long with my preparations," he heard the clear, undismayed voice say. He came by a suspicion that Clare Tyrwhit was enjoying herself. "I must arrange a few things and say good-bye to my children," he heard her add, and then there was just the suggestion of a faltering in the voice which he had learned to love in so short a time.

With a throbbing heart Ned proceeded to investigate his hiding-place. He stepped cautiously down the dark flight of stairs and found himself in a tiny chamber. It was lighted. William Ironmonger had re-lighted the two tapers and set them on a ledge. He himself was still in his vestments, and was kneeling in prayer before the ledge on which was deposited the ciborium. He was apparently finishing his interrupted Mass. He turned quickly as Ned entered, and drew a breath of relief when he saw who it was.

"You need not have tried to hide away like this," he said. "They wouldn't have harmed you, even if they had caught you with the rest. You are not a Catholic."

The same reproach, uttered for the last time.

"I have come to ask you to receive me into the Church," the other replied, and without further ado dropped on to his knees and waited.

In those days the reconciliation of heretics was a thing speedily accomplished. When so many lingered in bad

faith, though convinced in their hearts, on account of the dangers attached to the open profession of Catholicism, all that was required was an act of submission. Mr. Ironmonger heard Ned's confession as he knelt there, almost without a preliminary comment. The little hiding-place contained a stone vessel filled with water against emergencies, and with water and the Holy Ghost Ned Coleman was conditionally baptised, and all ecclesiastical censures removed from him.

The tears were standing in Mr. Ironmonger's eyes when he ended the simple ceremony. "Thank God for His mercies," he said. Then he added, "I consecrated one Host too many just now—I counted you in by mistake, I suppose"—he smiled—"I was just about to consume It when you came in." (Ned understood then the significance of the lights). "I shall be able to give you Holy Communion, and then I will finish saying Mass."

So it was that Ned received his first communion, in the hiding-hole where many a martyr had languished in the fierce days of Elizabeth, and in the present times as well. Mr. Ironmonger turned to the altar-ledge and concluded saying his Mass. Then facing the kneeling figure of the convert he proclaimed the "*Ita, missa est.*" "*Deo gratias!*" was the response.

So Ned Coleman served at Mass after all.

The priest proceeded in silence to extinguish the candles, after placing the sacred vessels in a secret receptacle under the flooring.

The place was thus left in total darkness. For a few minutes the silence remained unbroken. Ned made his thanksgiving in a kind of dream. He heard the priest's voice softly reciting passages from *The Imitation of Christ*, from memory—words full of a new and strange beauty. The speaker's voice was gentle and musical. The pregnant sentences fell on the ears of the neophyte as though spoken by the divine voice itself. Edward Coleman never forgot that quarter of an hour in the dark airless hiding-hole. "Now we will say the *Te Deum*," William Ironmonger said, and together they recited the Ambrosian hymn.

"This is not a remarkably pleasant place," Ned's companion observed in the tones of ordinary conversation, "but the Mother will come and fetch us when the coast is clear."

Then Ned told him what had happened. How Mistress Tyrwhit had been discovered in the chapel, and how she had been arrested on a charge of High Treason. He repeated the magistrate's words. The other's face was invisible in the black darkness, but Ned heard the quick indrawing of his breath. "God's will be done," the priest said, "but it will go badly with her. It has been coming for years. She was so absolutely fearless. God knows what they may not bring up against her!" The change in his voice almost shocked Ned. Mistress Tyrwhit's arrest was indeed a serious matter. The magistrate's words were no idle threat. Sitting there in the darkness Ned learned exactly what manner of woman this Clare Tyrwhit was. In her early youth one of the noble spirits who had followed Mistress Mary Ward in her efforts to establish a religious order for the instruction of children which should be out in the world and unenclosed, Clare Tyrwhit found herself one of those whose vocation seemed to have been baulked when the attempt to found the congregation in England failed. On the death of her father, however, the Wildwood estate passed into her possession, and Mistress Tyrwhit was enabled to start the work of saving the little ones to the faith. At first her object had been to instruct the children of the Catholic gentry, but the mother-heart of Clare Tyrwhit went out to the poor, and those ill-favoured by fortune, and it was the ill-fed and ill-clothed little ones who became the objects of her charity. Her inveterate love for the weakest of humanity filled Wildwood with the lame, the halt, and the blind, those least likely to be of use to the cause.

But Mistress Tyrwhit's active mind found a way for working the offspring of the gentry into her scheme. She persuaded the growing-up daughters of wealthy houses to join in her work, and, so to speak, test their vocation for the consecrated life of service or prayer.

Her niece, Margaret, had lived with her ever since the death of her father, a brother of Mistress Tyrwhit's, had left her an orphan.

Ned also learnt now, for the first time, that his companion's real name was William Ireland, and that he was chaplain to the Poor Clares at Gravelines, whither he was to conduct Mistress Rose Throckmorton, who was to enter the Franciscan order. Ned fairly gasped at this latter piece of information. The merry and audacious Rose a Poor Clare! "All the high-spirited girls join the severe orders," Father Ireland said. Ned had developed a new respect for the latter. He had heard Father Ireland spoken of during his stay at St. Omer's, as famous for his piety and the austerity of his life. So that was the secret of his gay fellow-guest—the fount of the imperturbable good-humour.—The discipline, the hair-shirt, and curtailed hours of sleep! He had also learnt the secret of the Lady of Wildwood—of that dignity that no playfulness could diminish—of that curious power of creating an atmosphere the reverse of frivolous in the midst of the most delicious gaiety. Above all, of that air of having a quiet joke against the world that treated her as a "secular." This, then, was the whole secret of Wildwood into which our hero was initiated as he sat in the darkness, hiding like a rat from the officers of his Sovereign Lord the King, whose laws he had just broken.

The priest accepted the situation in the most matter of fact way. It would probably be hours, perhaps another night, before they would be able to leave their place of concealment. The Mother would, no doubt, be carried off without undue delay. It was a terrible thought, but even that Father Ireland accepted with a certain equanimity when he had got over the first shock. "It is her great ambition to suffer for the faith," he said, "and it almost looks as though she were going to get her heart's desire."

So the hours passed by. They paced up and down the narrow cell to keep from getting stiff in the limbs. Father Ireland had much to tell Ned about his new responsibilities, and the gravity of the step that he had

embarked upon. He did not minimise the difficulties that lay before the young man. "The devil," he told Ned, "has invented the cruellest weapon against our holy faith that even the Satanic intelligence could conceive of—the vile calumny that the Catholic church permitted murder and regicide in the cause of religion, so that the more fervent and pious a Catholic a man was, the more people believed him capable of abominable offences. "They have turned the weapon of godliness against us," the priest explained. "They fear holiness as they would fear a foul and dangerous thing. The priest, or layman, for matter of that, who leads an edifying life comes under the worst suspicions of the most odious crimes. If they ever charge you with murder," William Ireland said, "it will stand proven against you if you are a good Catholic. That is how the devil has dealt with our Lady's dowry!"

It was not an exhilarating outlook, taken on an empty stomach. Ned counted the cost of the step that he had taken and faced Renouncement with a big capital "R." The thought of sacrifice had made his heart bound a while ago, but now a sinking feeling in his inner man was producing a like sensation in his heart.

He longed to ask the chaplain of the Gravelines community if Mistress Margaret Tyrwhit was one of those to be entrusted to his care. The question hung on his lips for hours as he sat there listening to Father Ireland's conversation and his speculations as to what was happening in the outraged little household.

"Do you suppose Mistress Madge will accompany the Mother?" he asked.

"It depends on the Mother," the priest answered, "but Madge will most probably be left in charge. She is second in command now-a-days."

"Then Mistress Madge was not to have gone with Mistress Rose?" Ned hazarded, hoping that the other would not notice anything peculiar in his manner of asking.

There was a moment's silence.

"Not this time," the priest said. So Ned sat looking

the future in the face. The Secretary of State, the king's right-hand man, and trusted servant, had made his bow and retired from his dreams as the Jesuit instructed him in the attitude borne by Englishmen towards his co-religionists, and now the husband of Margaret Tyrwhit, surely a title that spelt happiness in its entirety, independent of worldly prospects, passed out of the desolated picture. Two avenues admitting dazzling rays of light closed on him. It was a very, very dreary prospect, and Ned was horribly hungry. He remembered the old friar who had robbed him of his worldly possessions at one fell swoop. This sane and gentle-mannered Jesuit priest had done precisely the same thing when he poured the waters of baptism over his head. Only these later possessions were unspeakably more precious.

"Well?" the cheery voice asked of him in the darkness, "are you sorry that you've become a Papist?"

"What else could I do?" came the answer, given glumly enough. "It's the true faith, and Hell would be worse than this hole, I suppose! but I can't talk any more, I'm starving!"

"Well done!" the Jesuit said. "You're safe and sound, my dear Ned. You are independent of the emotions. Now we shall not be afraid though the mountains shall be moved into the sea. I do most sincerely hope we shall get supper soon, and a little fresh air will be agreeable."

"Do you think that the Capuchins would receive me as a brother?" Ned asked suddenly, after a silence, then added, rather dramatically, "I've done with the world!"

"Wait till you've had your supper," replied the voice that had quoted the sublime words of the "Imitation." "One can't renounce the world with any certainty on an empty stomach. I assure you, Ned, I was once two days in a hole like this and at the end of the time I would have become a Trappist if I had not already been a Jesuit."

"The subsequent feeding did not make a Protestant of you," came the retort, "so I suppose you were moderate in making up arrears."

"Good logic that," Will Ireland said. "We'll set you on Dr. Stillingfleet, my dear man." Ned felt the other's arm laid on his shoulder.

"You have the right spirit," the priest said, "you will serve the Lord with courtesy and a good grace. We might light up one of the candles and say Matins."

CHAPTER XV

IT was after nightfall when release finally came to the captives. Just when the stuffiness of their prison seemed to have grown unbearable—they had put out their light immediately after they had finished saying Matins to economise the wherewithal to breathe, and were again in darkness—when they heard a tapping on the panel at the top of the steps.

"Come," Father Ireland said, "that is our summons, or at least a meal."

They made haste up the steps. The panel door stood open, and beyond it, stood Madge holding a lamp in her hand. She stared in astonishment at the sight of Ned. "Mr. Coleman! We could not think where you had gone!" she exclaimed. "We concluded that you had fled the place in case you should be mistaken for a Catholic."

Ned drew himself up. "I am a Catholic!" he said.

"Yes," Father Ireland said, "I have received him into Holy Church. Brother Ned is one of us in very sooth. He runs all our risks—he is our compatriot." He smiled very sweetly at the lady with the lamp.

Madge very nearly dropped the latter. She went white first, and then a rosy red. The tears stood in her eyes.

"Oh how good God is!" she cried. "How good He is! If only the Mother could know, but they have taken her away to prison——"

"She does know," William Ireland said. "Ned here told her what he intended to do when he was following me. He heard them apprehending her afterwards and brought me the news—I was finishing my Mass down below."

"They took her away almost at once," Madge said, sorrowfully, "to Mr. Brownlow the magistrate's house at Eridge, and they left a man behind who has only just

gone—that is why we dared not come to you before. They would not allow me any private speech with the Mother, that is why she did not tell me—” she smiled at Ned, her sweet eyes now shadowed with trouble. How beautiful she looked, the lamp-light falling on her bright hair and turning it to living gold! “Phyllis has gone with her—she wouldn’t be refused—and she went oh, so gallantly, the darling Mother! All she minded was saying good-bye to the children. She insisted on going and kissing them all in their beds. One of the men went with her!” Madge’s eyes flashed—“They never left her alone for a moment, and they are going to charge her with High Treason at the Lewes Assizes! The little ricketty Johnny got out of bed and tried to follow her and fell down, and she made the men wait while she stopped and consoled him. It was so exactly like the Mother. That was the only time she nearly broke down, but she went gallantly,” Madge repeated.

“And she has left you behind to take her place?” Father Ireland said. “You will be brave, too, Madge, I warrant you would rather have been Phyllis.”

The tears rose in Madge’s eyes, but she struggled with them manfully.

“I am failing already,” she declared, in brisk tones, that bore a well-intentioned resemblance to Mistress Tyrwhit’s own. “You are both starving, and I have supper ready for you—luckily there is enough for two. I provided plentifully, for I have seen Mr. Ironmonger before,” she added archly, “when he emerged from a hiding hole.” It was a brave jest, bravely made. She led them to a little room, not one of the ordinary living rooms, caution was even now desirable, where a meal was set out. It was now close on ten o’clock. They had been a whole day in durance. Everybody had either returned home or retired to bed save John Mitton and Rose. The former was suffering a double desolation in the absence of his adored Phyllis. Rose was as cheery as ever. The brave spirit of the Lady of Wildwood was cultivated by all her disciples. This little remnant sat down to celebrate the great event

of Ned's reception into the Church in fitting style as the Mother would have had it. Perhaps Ned learnt then for the first time how spiritual was the gaiety that made Wildwood so lovable a place. The direful thing that had befallen its Mistress was not allowed to intervene to cast a shadow over the occasion, but the absence of the presiding spirit herself could not but make itself felt. How grievously they missed the presence that had created the atmosphere that made the little homestead as it were a daughter-house of some blissful foundation in the true *Patria* of the soul.

They sat late into the night discussing the situation. It was advisable that Father Ireland should lie quietly at Wildwood for a day or two, and he suggested that Ned should also spend the couple of days that he had at his disposal in making a spiritual retreat in the Ignation manner followed by the Jesuits, with a view to determining his future line of action. To this Ned readily agreed, and so the strangest day of his life ended. The little company recited lauds; and as the cock greeted the dawn they retired to bed.

They were a strange experience, those next two days which followed. Ned was kept strictly to his own room, taking exercise in the garden in solitude. Madge brought him his meals with her own hands, beautifully unconscious that her very presence might prove a distraction. Certain it was that Ned did not minimise what possibilities the world held for him when the chatelaine of Wildwood appeared—grave, as suited the occasion, and with a new dignity that the sense of responsibility had given her. An unusual quiet reigned, for the children had been sent to their respective homes by the magistrate's officers who haunted the neighbourhood and paid Mistress Margaret Tyrwhit many surprise visits during the day. Father Ireland spent a fair amount of his time in a seclusion even stricter than Ned's when he was not instructing the latter. There came news of the Mother on the following day, borne back to Wildwood by faithful John Mitton, who had been allowed to see the detained lady for a few moments.

She was comfortably housed, he was able to tell them, and treated with all due respect. Phyllis had told him that her spirits were excellent. The latter, John opined, was rather enjoying her monopoly of the beloved lady. "If only she were as fond of me!" thought poor John, with the despondency of a true and humble lover.

At the end of his two days of strenuous spiritual drill, Ned found himself still adhering to the resolution that he had made in the hiding-place a few hours after he had taken the great step. He would renounce the world and its allurements and join the Franciscan order. William Ireland heard his decision in silence. There was a Capuchin father at Tunbridge Wells who enjoyed certain liberties on account of his connection with the Queen-Mother's household. Ned had better see him, and if so be, offer himself to the great family of St. Francis.

"Remember this, my son," he said, "that a clean sweep sometimes seems simpler, and wherefore easier, than tidying up one's affairs. It is less strenuous to throw things away than to clean and scour them for a new use, but the Lord be with you, if it is to be as you desire."

So, on the third morning, Ned rode away from Wildwood on a momentous undertaking, to wit, to beg for the rough brown habit of St. Francis, and the life of poverty under the three vows of religion.

Old Robin saddled his horse, and Mistress Madge herself saw him into the saddle. She had been told of the nature of his journey, and she smiled brightly as she wished him "Good luck!"

"You will pray for me?" Ned whispered, hardly daring to look into the blue eyes that were so suspiciously moist.

"Of course, I will. *Dominus tecum*, Ned"

She called him by his name quite bravely. He felt that it implied a new spiritual relationship. The old shyness was gone. Poor Ned! At that moment he hated his brown taffatas, and felt a kind of nausea in regard to the young man who was about to receive the tonsure, and be removed from the human joys of this remarkably possible world. Did one indeed, but learn of these things that one

might know the greater joy of renouncing them? Yet never was the "magic" of Wildwood more apparent than at this moment when Ned felt that he was giving up the sweetest thing it contained. His soul suddenly became bathed in the light that is independent of the sunshine of circumstance. Oh, the magnificence of the spiritual adventure—how blithesome the quest of san graal, albeit that san graal held the bitterest draught on earth!

It was certainly in a kind of dream that Ned rode along the wood-lined Sussex road. He was trying to realise all that he had abandoned, and the full meaning of the plunge that he was taking. This dream-mood was one that could not last long. The day clouded over—a few spots of rain fell, and Ned's enthusiasm suffered from the damp. He became almost as sad as the young man in the gospel who was required to sell all that he had—Ned wondered if that young man had had any matrimonial projects. He began to feel that the Church of his adoption was behaving somewhat like a step-mother in ordaining these situations—but he adhered to his purpose. It never so much as occurred to him that he yet might change his mind. Sulky as he had grown with his mother Church—and there is no denying it that Edward Coleman was distinctly sulky with the Power behind his action, it suggested no turning back—this present state of his mind. The impulse that said, "go on!" took no notice of Ned's sulks. It is one of the phenomena of the religion that he had adopted—this underpinning of the emotions with something extraordinarily solid.

The sight of the Capuchin father in his cell, clad in his rough brown habit, somewhat revived our hero. The friar was elderly and grey-bearded. He had a great reputation for sanctity, and for the austerity of his living. His cell was an appallingly naked apartment. Its sole furniture consisted of a table and stool, a straw bed, and a second chair to accommodate a visitor. A crucifix hung on the wall, and above it was written the uncompromising and pertinent enquiry, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?"

Ned found all this inspiring. The signs of heroic poverty were exactly the stimulant he required. The friar received him with the utmost kindness, after reading the letter that Ned carried from Father Ireland by way of introduction. He conveyed to the young man a sense of intense interest, and also of pleasure, in his narrative that heartened him to tell his story in its entirety. He started with his ride out into the world—his ambitions, the story of his robbery, and then the loss of his purse (the Father smiled widely at the account of Brother Giles)—his introduction to Wildwood, and his first glimpse of the Catholic religion in practice, his subsequent good fortune in meeting the King, and his education in the Embassy at Paris for secretarial work. He spoke with great frankness, too, of his attraction to the Catholic Church, and his endeavour to feel himself justified in remaining outside until he had seen his position in its true light at the secret Mass at Wildwood. (Ned noticed that the friar smiled whenever he mentioned the name of the enchanted place, and when he came to the point in his story when the unexpected opportunity occurred for his visiting the notorious lady, the Capuchin murmured a long-drawn "Ah!" that was very expressive). He wound up his narrative with the request that he might be received as a brother into the Order of Friars Minor, and take the three vows of religion. He had dwelt on his prospects in the King's service in order that the Capuchin might realise all that he was prepared to give up—how complete a renunciation it would be. He was not seeking praise or approval, but the dramatic instinct in him could not but make the most of the situation. He at least might enjoy this much in making the sacrifice, and stand aside and survey himself as the hero of a romantic story.

The old man sat with his eyes fixed thoughtfully on his client. He pulled his beard through his hand in silence, and gave himself to pray.

CHAPTER XVI

AT last the answer came.

"My son," the old friar said, slowly, regarding Ned's eager face with a straight, simple gaze that was full of gentleness. "God has a special work for you most assuredly, but I do not think that it is in our order, nor in any religious order. I do not think that the sacred vocation to the priesthood is yours either." He paused and looked at the young man whose crest had drooped most conspicuously.

"You see, son," he went on, slowly and patiently, almost sleepily, "the safest way to judge of our vocation is by outward circumstance. Inward feelings are not so reliable, they are interwoven with so many human impulses, they cannot always be trusted. But of our outward circumstances we can judge unerringly if we have not induced them by deliberate evil. You have these gifts which have won you a place in the king's household—intellectual gifts, and personal gifts." (He smiled kindly at the young man with the humbled bones). "It appears to be your vocation to remain where you have been led by Providence in so extraordinary a manner, and to use those talents for the furtherance of God's glory and good of His Church.

"It will be difficult," he went on. "More difficult than an entire change of life—to remain in the former mode of life with things invaded by a new irksomeness—new disagreeables and dangers."

He paused and examined the face before him, meditatively.

"Child," he said, "do not think that God is refusing a sacrifice of you. Remember, nothing is secular save sin. This may be a religious life to which you are called. A religious life where it is sadly needed—where truth and

honour, and uprightness of conscience are so soon forgotten, and excuses found for grievous sins against righteousness. Labour for the conversion of England with these talents of yours—Go into that gay apostate world and marry some noble-hearted Catholic woman who will aid your work and recognise your vocation. There lies your vocation, my son, and may the Lord bless and keep you!”

It would be difficult to describe our hero's feelings. He had received a bad snub to begin with. The idea that the Friars Minor would not accept him had been a possibility that had not so much as occurred to him. No doubt it had been present in Father Ireland's mind, but the Jesuit had, characteristically, tested his sincerity. To be told quite plainly that you have no religious vocation after stringing yourself up to the necessary pitch of self-surrender is extremely trying to that annihilated self, be it remembered! The friar's later words, on the other hand, had set Ned's pulses throbbing, especially the final admonition—“marry some noble-hearted Catholic lady.” Was it possible that for a second time his wealth was being handed back to him?—This time after he had yielded it voluntarily? He saw, as in a flash, how much human sentiment had been mixed up in his attraction to the Franciscan fraternity—yet God had used it to sound the depths of his good will. It was in the divine scheme, not to be despised or brushed over, this episode with the Lady Poverty—his courtship of her, and his rejection.

“I will most gladly receive you into our third order,” the father said, “so that you may indeed wear the cord and brown habit and be a true son of St Francis. Yes, indeed (in answer to Ned's query) “the spirit of Franciscan poverty can be preserved at court. Kings themselves and queens, have been Tertiaries. You will wear the little habit under your finery, 'tis a grand idea, my son, that of the cord beneath the sash. Let that be your ideal and all will be well with you.” He rose and returned with a thin piece of cord and two small squares of coarse brown cloth, attached to one another by tapes, in his hand. Bidding Ned kneel down, he threw the scapular over his shoulders

and placed the knotted cord round his waist. He recited a few prayers, ending with the words, "Arise, and Christ shall give thee light!"

So it was that Edward Coleman was received into the great family of St Francis.

"Remember," the Capuchin said to him as he bade him good-bye, "the cord beneath the sash. Never forget to wear the little habit. Be as brave as you will outside, but never forget the little habit, for you have become a true son of Francis to-day and he will keep you unspotted by the world. Farewell, my brother."

Ned set out soberly on his homeward journey. He did not question the wisdom of the friar, nor the finality of his decision. The hurt to his self-esteem still asserted itself—he felt somewhat like a little child who has offered to be useful and had been told to run away and play, in spite of the friar's words concerning his true vocation. Renunciation was at least accompanied by a thrill, but this facing of the existing order of things with all that made it pleasurable abstracted was not in the least inspiring. He had expected this son of Francis to bid him cast away the good things of this life—which, after all, is dramatic enough to be exhilarating, but instead of that he had merely strewn ashes over the tasty dish that custom set before him! Henceforward he would feel the irk of that symbolic little square of haircloth underneath the luxurious silken underwear, pricking him like conscience itself. It was cunningly contrived, this compounding with the demands of Society that the spirit of the little Poor Man had achieved. The friar had not suggested that his position at court would be impossible—that it would even be imperilled—but he had rubbed it in that it would become exceedingly disagreeable and difficult. Ned knew it would be impossible to keep his change of religion secret. The "test," viz, attendance at the Anglican sacrament, might be imposed at any moment; moreover he had no intention of sailing under false colours. It was a most unpleasant prospect. The King would be furious—Ned didn't doubt—he would be disgusted with the subject of his royal patronage. Loyalty

and gratitude alike would demand that his *protégé* remained as the King would wish. It was grievous pain to our hero to be despised and disapproved of. No wonder he rode back to Wildwood a sober and songless step-son of the dazzling Lady Poverty.

As Ned approached the enchanted woods that lured the wanderer to the little homestead in the clearing, his depression deepened. He shirked the humiliation of having to report his rejection—his ignominious relegation as he chose to consider it, to the lighter task. What would Margaret say when she heard that the cord had not replaced but merely supplemented the sash, and that the latter was to remain uppermost?

He had a fancy to ride through the wood although the road was his nearest way. He was thinking of the days, five years back, when he had ridden across the Sussex hills for the first time. He turned his horse's head and entered the avenue of larches that just admitted a peep of blue sky above. Striking off to the left, the path became narrower—so much so that he had to dismount to avoid the overhanging branches.

It was a golden evening—the sun just setting, and the glory of its glow on the foliage. Yet something was missing. Ned fell to wondering what the woods would have had to say to him had he borne home the news of his acceptance into the order of the patron saint of Nature. He had a feeling that they had no word this evening. He stood outside the magic circle. He caught himself wondering if Wildwood itself would have ceased to be an enchanted spot. Just then he caught sight of something brown fluttering among the trees. It was a hooded figure—the identical one that he had seen on a former occasion! Yes, it was Madge herself, coming towards him swiftly down the crisp, cone-strewn path. "Do you know," she said delightedly, "I had a feeling that you would return this way. Was I not clever?" She was looking very pale—the Mother's absence, and the impending danger, were beginning to tell on her.

"So you came to look for me in case some misadventure

might have overtaken me," Ned put in. "Nay, I have my purse safe and sound," he added, smiling grimly. "The Capuchin father has been more clement than Brother Giles—he will have none of me. He has sent me back to the world."

There was so much real pain and bitterness in his voice as he got his news out that Madge's heart went out to him. "Tie up your horse—no, let him go—he knows his way home," she said, "and we will sit down and talk."

They sat down among the bracken like a pair of children, Madge leading the way, and not losing any of the new dignity that her recent responsibilities, and that honourable visitor, sorrow, had bestowed upon her.

"And what did the Father say?" she asked.

"He told me I had no vocation, not even to the secular priesthood," Ned answered. "I am to be a respectable layman—that's all I'm fit for!" He dug his heel into the soft sod and smiled a wry smile that he might have learned from the king himself.

Madge drew a quick breath. Then she looked up at him commiseratingly. "I know the feeling," she whispered. "It was like that when the Mother told me that my vocation was not the cloister—that I ought to go to court."

This time Ned gave a sharp gasp. A strange sense of unreality, of being in a dream, overtook him.

"I thought that you were going to be a nun—some day?" he murmured, in a queer husky tone. "Father Ireland said that you were not going to Gravelines this time? he inferred that you might be going later."

"Ah," Madge said quickly, "that was only because he, he—" she pulled up dead short and blushed furiously.

Ned took the bull magnificently by the horns.

"Because he thought that I might want to marry you instead of going into religion?"

"No, not that," Madge answered, quickly. "He wanted to test your motive for becoming a Catholic." Then she blushed more than ever, and endeavoured to carry off the most embarrassing situation by assuming a

matter of fact manner. "I must needs defend the father," she blundered on, "he would not have got you into religion on a false supposition." It was getting worse. The *pro tem* mistress of Wildwood was just on the verge of tears, only tears would be the one impossible and unforgivable thing.

It rested with Ned to embrace the situation—he did so in what was no doubt the most effective way—He embraced the lady!

It was a tribute to his tactics on this occasion that he met with no opposition. An embrace, when you are deeply in love, is a convincing mode of expression. Madge allowed her head to rest on Ned's shoulder while he explained to her how the probability that she was dedicated to the cloister had haunted him, receding only when his own vocation to a single life seemed indicated. "I renounced the possibility of winning you for my wife," he whispered, "along with the other things when I went out this afternoon, but when the father refused me, I began to think of you again as out of my reach on that count."

"I tried to give you up to God cheerfully," Madge responded, "but—oh, Ned! it nearly broke my heart!"

"And now God has given us to each other," her lover said—and so they took their vows, a very holy pact, kneeling down side by side in the bracken, and asking the blessing of God on their happiness which they had so willingly laid on His altar at His apparent bidding, a couple of simple, generous souls whom the good God surely had not bidden run away and play?

CHAPTER XVII

"IT must be getting late!" the chatelaine of Wildwood exclaimed suddenly. "What would the Mother say to me?" she added guiltily. "I ought to have been back ages ago! Oh, Ned, how delighted she will be! If only she were here to go to—and, and——"

"And be scolded," her lover finished gleefully. They moved homeward through the silent wood. It was a perfect evening, but the spirit of the place was in hiding. The present is eminently free from mystery, and lovers live preeminently in the present. True they had begun to talk of the future—of Ned's vocation to serve the faith in high places. Madge was certain of the destiny of her betrothed. He was to effect the conversion of the king first, and then England *en masse*. What was not possible to a wise and zealous statesman?

"We will convert England together," Ned said (what man could not convert England with such a helpmeet at his side?) "Why, yes, sweetheart, we'll weave a magnificent plot—it will be a gigantic conspiracy with every Catholic worthy of the name concerned in it. Wildwood and Gravelines will pray, and we will act, and the king and all his ministers will be dragged in by sheer force!"

So they chatted; half earnest, half playful, as I believe is the way of lovers, since the shy earnestness of love must perforce seek shelter behind a jest. Well it was for them that the Titus Oates had not at that period been expelled from his Majesty's navy and forced to seek a living by plot-making, for the trees might have had ears and the conversation might have got repeated in quarters where it would have been welcomed! As it was, they passed a youth on their path who appeared suddenly from the

undergrowth and regarded the couple with an inquisitive gaze. The sudden encounter disturbed Madge for a moment. "That boy is not trustworthy," she said. "I hope he has not been prowling round Wildwood and caught sight of Father Ireland. He has given evidence against the Mother before now. She befriended him out of pity when he was small—he has not got all his wits—but he turned out an ungrateful piece of baggage—the Mother has had some disappointments, but she is quite incorrigible. Father Ireland has warned her to be careful whom she takes into Wildwood, but, as he says himself, she is God's dunce, and she won't learn her lesson!"

They had been brought back to the realities of the moment—the sad thought of the Mother's absence, and the sobering realisation of the shadow that hung over Wildwood. They approached the house, with its peculiar air of desolation—almost of doom. The unmistakable marks of the absence of prosperity that it displayed struck Ned afresh. Wildwood was indeed the home of the Lady Poverty in these hard times, yet it must have been a fine, fair place in the old days—as fine as the homes of the time-servers with whom Ned blushed to think he had been tempted to throw in his lot.

The betrothed lovers carried their news straight to Father Ireland. Ned announced it characteristically. "The friars, he told the Jesuit, "would have none of him. The father's advice had been that he should go out into the world and get betrothed to a virtuous Catholic lady, and—well, here she was!"

Even the imperturbable William Ireland was somewhat taken aback at the celerity of the sequence of events. "Your instinct of prompt obedience would almost seem to give the lie to the father's decision," he remarked drily—and then he gave the pair his priestly blessing and they became sufficiently serious. There was a truce to banter till Mistress Rose appeared on the scene, and then the audacious flippancy of the lady destined to the Poor Clares revived the joke against Ned. Rose congratulated him with exceeding gravity on his docility, which she found

most edifying, and also approved of Madge's admirable sense of duty in undertaking the rôle of the virtuous lady (Madge and Rose would have their talk later on). John Mitton, whose literal mind had even withstood the Wildwood influence, wondered if the cold-hearted Phillis could be brought to benefit by Madge's example, and assume the responsibilities of a virtuous Catholic lady, and enable him to do his duty as a Catholic layman. Honest John Mitton was commonly said to be the only stupid person of her own class that the Mother had been known to tolerate, but the fact remained that she had a great regard for John.

Father Ireland fully approved of the friar's decision. It was by no means a surprise to him. He and Ned paced together under the stars after the others had betaken themselves to bed.

"Yours will be the more difficult vocation," the Jesuit told Ned, "that is, if you make a real religious vocation of it, and please God you will. A noble end will sanctify certain means, but there is ever the danger of the means becoming an end in themselves. An apostle, for instance, may become a controversialist and make an end of that, and cease to be a Christian!" "And there were even more de-christianising means than controversy," he told Ned, "to be employed of necessity by those who would spread the faith. Political means, the art of being all things to all men, and the policy of being content with half a loaf while the occasion ripened. All these necessary tactics were insidious. One might soon make an end of moderation and broad-mindedness, and take the approval of men for the approval of God, and sacrifice the end to the means."

All this Ned listened to and became zestful to handle the very delicate instruments destined for his manipulation. He felt a new joy in the rough underhabit of which no one guessed the presence; the antidote which should rasp his skin when he was wearing the robes of a Minister of State. He longed to set out on this new game of hoodwinking a world that would see in him only a worldling—He would masquerade as a masquerader, as Jacopone had masqueraded as a fool, and incidentally the conversion of His

Majesty would be effected. It was almost as intoxicating as the Franciscan ideal. Mr. Edward Coleman went off to bed entirely enamoured of his new vocation.

The principal guest-chamber at Wildwood, which had been allotted to him was a large apartment with a fine view of the woods. Mr. Coleman set his lamp down on a table near the window and prepared to enter the momentous events of the day in his journal.

"We have a great work before us," he wrote, "no less than the conversion of England." He received no premonition of the day when England would be ringing with those very words, written in his own hand for other eyes. Of the other entries he made it would not be fair to give even the privileged reader a glimpse. Well it was for him that the ribald observations of Mr. Tom Rich could not be applied to the very lovely rhapsody contained therein!—True it is that Ned took the precaution to write in cipher, an accomplishment which he had acquired at the Embassy. He threw himself on to the window-seat and gazed out into the moonlight. He saw the dark belt of the enchanted woods where such strange things had happened. He thought of the spring day five years ago. His first taste of freedom—the interlude with the Lady Poverty, and then his first sight of Margaret Tyrwhit. This morning's prospect of renunciation, that was connected with the woods, too. How full they had been of that wild sense of exhilaration that inebriated such souls as Jacopone or old Giles! Then the return, and the meeting with Madge and the glorious betrayal of their mutual secret. He fell to thinking tenderly of his lady-love. The one thing that robbed their joy of perfection was the thought of the Mother's danger. He felt quite selfishly resentful of this damping of their happiness. He stared out into the dark woods and found himself wondering if that other joy, the mad joy of the morning, were capable of being damped by circumstances?

The thought of Mistress Tyrwhit's parlous position—of the menace to Wildwood, had been a thing to sing about then! Was it his fancy, or was the genius of Wildwood

shy of this new joy of his?—a joy that suffered mitigation at the thought of storm and stress? The witchery of the place had never been so near to being absent as on this night, when his sack of corn had been delivered to him, full to overflowing, and with the purchase money lying on the top!

“The best thing you can do,” Father Ireland said to the lovers next morning as the breakfasted together; “the only thing, in fact” (he shook his head gravely at Madge) “is to ride over and see the Mother and confess the mischief that you have been getting into in her absence.” He, himself, was to leave Wildwood that day to do his “trading” elsewhere.

The proposed visit was quite practicable. Mr. Brownlow had offered no objection to Mistress Tyrwhit receiving her friends while she was in his house. Accordingly the horses were saddled, and the lovers set out, riding, side by side, to report themselves, and convey their news to the lady to whom it would give such joy. It was a very sober and serious wooing. Both these young people took themselves sufficiently seriously, and their conversation was mainly of how they would meet the responsibilities of the future. They reached great and surprising heights in their schemes as they rode slowly and closely together. Might not the King of France himself be brought to further the cause? The Mother was intimate with Madame the Duchess of Orleans, and much might be done through her, for King Charles adored his sister. They made a charming pair, this brace of sedition-mongers, for what else were they? plotting thus against the established religion of their country? Both young and well-favoured. Madge wearing the air of gentle dignity accruing to one who has been Mistress of Wildwood for two whole days! and, who, moreover, possessed the sweet consciousness of being beloved and bespoken by the only man in the wide world that one could dream of marrying; and Ned, bright-eyed and eager, in his brown taffetas cloak and white ruffles, and withal, the habit and cord underneath to ensure to him the true Franciscan demeanour.

As they approached Mr. Brownlow's house it was hard to believe that they were going to see one held in durance. Still less did their reception give this idea. The visitors were greeted with all respect and conducted by a manservant to Mistress Tyrwhit's apartments. They were accorded the privilege of a private interview, moreover. True, the walls might have ears, but that could be guarded against.

The servant turned a key and opened a door and then introduced the visitors to the lady's apartment with the ordinary ceremony of a private household. It was a large, handsomely furnished room, the bed-chamber leading out beyond. The Lady of Wildwood was by herself. She was seated reading at the window, which overlooked the magnificent grounds attached to the mansion, and very charming and picturesque she looked—a very gracious and dignified lady, though an impenitent breaker of the law of the land. She glanced up at the approach of her visitors, and setting her book down greeted them with her brightest smile.

"Madge and Brother Ned! This is very welcome!"

She held out her hands to them, holding Ned's while the girl encircled her neck with both arms and kissed her again and again.

They knew that she had guessed their news. "You must kiss me too," Ned said, "for we are betrothed, and we have come to tell you."

"I am very glad," the Mother said—she was always simple on great occasions—and he got his kiss.

"Your husband will get on in the world," she said to Madge, who blushed quite prettily at the premature title, "he will lose nothing for the want of asking!"

She was quite in her most delightful vein, gleesome and full of banter. "We must send for Phyllis," she said, "she is in the garden taking the air." To the servant who answered her summons she made the request that Mistress Phyllis be informed of the presence of the visitors. Then she added, "and will you please desire Mr. Brownlow of his courtesy to let me have a flagon of

wine. I am anxious to celebrate a feast with my friends!"

The servant received the instructions with the most profound respect. The Mother's gravity was unimpeachable.

"Mr. Brownlow is a most courteous gaoler," she commented when the servant had retired to execute his commission, "he supplies all my needs, even the where-withal to entertain my guests." She smiled rather an elfish smile—"I feel grateful to him for not making my sex a bar to my suffering for my faith, so I accept his little attentions in the spirit that they are offered. Besides"—relapsing into gravity—"Ned here has shown us what can be got for the asking!"

Phyllis appeared on the scene duly, and was overjoyed to see her beloved Madge and to hear the news. The two friends chatted together while Ned talked to the Mother of his own great piece of news. John Mitton had told her of Ned's conversion, but she had been the first one to know—she had known it up in the chapel that morning when Ned turned to follow the priest. She listened, silently attentive, as he told her the story of his resolution, and of described his visit to the Capuchin.

She became very thoughtful. "I'm glad you offered yourself," she said. "No doubt the father was right, but it will be a thorny way for you, Ned. Madge has found it so already, even in the comparative shelter of Queen Catherine's circle. You two young people will have to be very brave and strong, but"—her eyes glistened—"it is a great vocation!" She placed her hand in his and gently shook it. "You must convert King Charles," she said, "he has good in him—at the bottom. I met him in Paris when we were both young." She paused. "When Charles Stuart believes that other men believe what they profess, he will become a Catholic. You must show him that you *believe* your religion, Ned."

Ned went on to tell her of the schemes that he and Madge had formed for the future—of the influence that he hoped to gain over the King's ministers. He was as dogmatic now as he had been liturgical before, after the

way of raw converts. The Mother listened in silence. "You must show that you believe," she repeated, "you who are not a priest, but a man of the world—that you believe with your heart as well as your head. We have plenty of controversialists—with a longer experience than yours"—she flashed a quiet smile at him—"we want Catholics worthy of their faith." She shook his hand gently a second time. "God will be with you, Brother Ned."

At this moment the serving-man re-entered bearing a flagon and silver drinking vessels. "My master wishes me to say," he announced, "that he has great pleasure in offering the wine to my lady's guests. He hopes that it will prove agreeable to my lady. It is the best in his cellar."

"Convey my best thanks to your master," the lady said, "and tell him that I celebrate the betrothal of my niece, Mistress Margaret Trywhit and Mr. Edward Coleman of Whitehall, so I greatly appreciate his courtesy."

The servant absorbed the message with undisguised interest. He had not the highly-trained mask-countenance of the footman of a later age. He held the captive lady in too much awe, however, to venture on a grin.

"Now," the lady said, when he had departed, "we will pledge our toast." She charged the drinking-cups with the red wine, which certainly was no inferior vintage. "To my newly betrothed children," she said, "and to the Plot Magnificent!"

Ned raised his cup. "That our Lady may recover her dowry!"

"And Wildwood its mistress," Phyllis added softly. She alone of the party had not set aside for the moment the realisation of the Mother's position. Her eyes seldom left the worn face. Phyllis was in the secret of the wakeful nights—of the Mother's gnawing anxiety for the little ones of whose fate she had enquired in so calm and business-like a manner—the little ones who, in all probability, she would never gather round her again.

Phyllis, too, was in the secret of the malignant homesickness from which the lady of Wildwood was suffering. She too, sharing the Mother's captivity, could realise the feeling caused by the turning of the key in the lock, albeit that it was but a formal precaution, and access to the garden was always to be obtained when desired. Phyllis in short, was far from forgetting that the Mother was a prisoner.

It was when they rose to depart that the position made itself felt to the visitors. "Oh Mother! if you could but come back with us!" Madge burst out, "Wildwood is horrible without you." She clung to the other passionately.

"And I must leave to-morrow," Ned chimed in. "If only I could have stopped on till, till, the Assizes."

"They will take me to Lewes in a day or two," the Mother said, "and then I shall get a real prison!" Her eyes brightened. "You will have to find out all the charges that they mean to bring against me and let me know so that I can make my defence. I don't suppose they will allow me counsel."

The key grated in the lock and the domestic entered. He had suddenly become a gaoler. Madge's heart sank with a wild foreboding as the key was once more turned, and the Mother was left a prisoner in the hands of her enemies.

They rode back to Wildwood with a shadow over their happiness.

CHAPTER XVIII

IT was a tragedy, the depth of which all lovers will realise, that Mr. Coleman's leave of absence terminated next day. The manipulation of the Parliamentary person had been successfully achieved and Mr. Treasurer's emissary was now due to return to town in the retinue of my Lord Arundel of Wardour. The little depleted party at Wildwood had made their plans. Madge and Rose would remain at Wildwood until the Assizes were over. After that—? No one dared discuss the after that. Who could say where the Mother would be? A term of imprisonment seemed inevitable, and there might be worse. Confiscation? Banishment? But of course the King would intervene in the case of a particularly brutal sentence. Ned told himself that he would see to that since he had access to His Majesty, whose opinion of the Notorious Lady he had received from his own lips. Meanwhile Rose would have to postpone her journey to Gravelines. She might go to the convent on Hammersmith Mall where the nuns were friends of the Mother's, and some of them her former associates in the days when they had gathered round Mistress Mary Ward. The work at Wildwood seemed doomed to the same fate as the valiant Mistress Ward's foundations. There could be no hope of entertaining the little guests at Wildwood, at any rate until the times changed for the better. The thought of the little ones scattered right and left, at the mercy of temporary guardians or in homes that the laws would proceed to wipe out of existence as the penalty of the parent's faith, was terrible indeed. Even Rose's high spirits all but failed her

at the prospect of the undoing of the Mother's life-work. Ned left a sorrowful little household behind him when he rode away next morning to join Lord Arundel's suite at Tunbridge Wells.

The gaiety of the watering-place jarred on his nerves. He was frankly dreading his return to town and the subsequent complications arising from his profession of the proscribed religion. The first one to be informed would be his chief, Sir Thomas Clifford. His sympathies with Popery were well known, but sympathies and open profession were two different things, Ned knew.

He faced Sir Thomas with his announcement immediately on his return to the dingy house in Pall Mall where so much of the secret history of England was made. The Treasurer received the confession gravely. "You do not propose to blurt this out to everyone you meet?" he asked, surveying the young confessor with signs of impatience. "Believe what you will, but don't go proclaiming it from the house-tops—you'll only bore people, for one thing, and in political circles you'll court distrust and suspicion."

"I fear I shall lose the King's good opinion," Ned said, glumly enough. Mr. Treasurer shrugged his shoulders. "Open profession of one's religion is always dangerous," he remarked.

"And yet if one has been given the light one is bound to let it shine," Ned retorted—There was a light burning in his eyes that the other found rather searching.

"It is not always safe to let one's light shine when one is seated on a powder barrel," Sir Thomas observed drily. "They will say soon enough that you have used your light to set fire to London, or the king's palace."

The king gave our hero an audience on the following day. Ned looked forward to the interview with many qualms. He would make a clean breast of what he had done to the king as he had done to Mr. Treasurer. He hoped his majesty would not ply him with questions. He must not betray Father Ireland. If the king did press for details—well, he must refuse to furnish them and go to

the Tower and be racked! It will be noted that our hero incarcerated himself in the prison reserved for prisoners of rank. Newgate did not enter into his august calculations.

As it happened, the king's lap-dog chanced to be unusually engaging at the crucial moment when Ned proclaimed to his majesty, in slightly pompous tones, that he had become a member of the Church of Rome.

Charles was regarding it attentively as it sat on his knee.

"I can't understand," he remarked thoughtfully, "how all that intelligence can be packed into its head!" He covered up the little creature's minute skull with his hand and so provoked a soul-shaking yelp that all but made Ned jump. He didn't jump, however. He didn't even turn a hair of his new periwig. "The ant, I'm told," quoth he, "has marvellous intelligence, and it has even less accommodation for its brain."

The king smiled widely and whole-heartedly. It gave him genuine pleasure to be played up to in this fashion. Ned felt, for his part, that he had shown his breed. He had not squirmed when he had been picked up by the tail. The king approved that kind of pet even in the human species.

"Whatever possessed you to tell me that you had turned papist?" his majesty asked, scrutinizing Ned with a frankly amused gaze. "They're always trying to poison me, and so forth!"

"I told you," Ned replied, "so that I might reassure your majesty of my loyalty and devotion. You will not believe in them less because I have been honest with you over this, Sir?"

He surveyed the sardonic face before him appealingly.

The king was twisting his mouth downward to disguise a smile.

"But suppose you had to choose between me and your Church?" he queried. "What then?"

There was a moment's silence. Then Ned replied boldly, looking his monarch well in the face. "My Church would come first."

"God in Heaven!" his majesty ejaculated, "I have found an honest man!"

Ned looked up quickly—he had dropped his eyes—to see if he was again being lifted up by the tail, but the merry monarch was serious.

"So you are settled in Mr. Treasurer's household," he commented. "I may have reason to borrow you occasionally when I have need of a private secretary—that is a luxury that a monarch has to indulge in under the rose, so you will see that you are private, not official. Can you keep a secret, Ned?"

Ned could hardly believe that it was the king who was speaking. The tone was that which one familiar friend would use to another, and the use of his short name—Ned—from the king's lips very nearly placed our hero in a state of hysteria.

"I am absolutely your majesty's servant," he murmured. He could hardly grasp what had happened. His majesty was going to take him into his personal service. The conversion of England was already half accomplished. It was almost like a miracle. The Mother, too! He could now watch over her interests and obtain her speedy release.

Ned returned to Mr. Treasurer's in a state of mental intoxication, hugging his glorious secret. He, Edward Coleman, was the king's man, and it was his secret and the king's—they shared it together—the king and Ned Coleman! Truly the Plot Magnificent was beginning in good earnest to shape itself. Such events as this could not be fortuitous! He echoed the Mother's toast privately at supper that night when Mr. Treasurer's clerks were making merry with some guests of consequence—"To the Plot Magnificent?"

CHAPTER XIX

NED found that Mistress Tyrwhit's arrest was the prevailing subject of conversation in Mr. Treasurer's household. For the first time he learned the true importance of the new form that the Notorious Lady's persecution had taken. Father Ireland was right. Mistress Tyrwhit had exhausted the patience of her persecutors. The Statute book contained the death penalty for offences that Mistress Tyrwhit flaunted in the face of the magistracy. A whole generation of Catholics had grown up owing to her system of giving house-room to the children of recusants, whose recusancy was on the ebb, and unlikely to survive in the children. Hitherto the offender's sex had saved her from the extreme measures dealt out to priests and male subverters of the King's subjects, but at last it had been determined to make an example of this mischievous and defiant woman who did more harm than twenty Jesuits. Ned had to endure the trying experience of sitting at table and hearing Mr. Treasurer's guests discuss the question in all its bearings. They were all more or less sympathetic, though none of them professed the Catholic faith openly. It was unanimously agreed that things would go badly with Mistress Tyrwhit. A quantity of evidence had been collected with the utmost pains to prove that the vilest conspiracy had been hatched in Mistress Tyrwhit's house by the Jesuits, an important witness being a half-witted youth who had been educated by the Notorious Lady. The Assize Judge was one known to be no friend to the Catholics. There would be no difficulty in bringing in a verdict of High Treason, and it was generally felt that the

time had come when the usual clemency accorded to a woman would be misplaced.

Ned listened to all this with a benumbed heart, sitting there half dazed with the hatefulness of it, while the company complacently discussed the Wildwood community according to their lights.

"Poor woman, poor woman!" one guest said—a kindly and affable gentleman of the name of Evelyn. "'Tis the Jesuits who are to blame. She is completely dominated, I have been told, by one Ireland, or Ironmonger, a Jesuit priest who uses her as a decoy to get young girls out of the country into a nunnery at Gravelines where he is superior"—Mr. Evelyn's terms were slightly inaccurate—"This fellow has her entirely under his thumb, and they say he is one of the most unscrupulous of these Jesuits—a vile plotter of iniquity."

Even at the present juncture Ned could not forbear to smile at the picture of the Mother under anyone's thumb. It was difficult to sit still and hear Wildwood alluded to as a den of iniquity, but Ned had already learned the futility of trying to convince persons of Mr. Evelyn's stamp. His heart cried out at the mad injustice of it.

It was as usual from William Throckmorton that Ned got his news of Wildwood and the Mother. Will had ridden off to Sussex to see how things progressed and brought back a great story of the Mother's transit from Mr. Brownlow's house to Lewes Jail.

He and Ned walked out together into St. James' Park, and he recounted the whole thing as it had happened. Will was a great story-teller. They sat down on a bench, among the gay crowd seeking the wherewithal to amuse itself, and Ned heard the story.

The village folk had got to hear when the Mother was to be removed, and they all collected on the Green—the poor folks whom she had fed day by day. Old and young, men, women, and children. They had waited, hour by hour, in groups and clusters, until Mr. Brownlow's big coach appeared, and then the men had fallen on the postillions and stopped the horses. After that they had got

the coachman off his box. Mr. Brownlow had been inside the coach with his convoy. "He thrust his head out in a fair state of alarm," said Will, "and asked what was the matter, and an old gaffer answered up, 'we wants to know the reason why you be taking the Christian lady to jail, and we poor folks to starve meanwhiles?'" Then a rough fellow at the back shouted out, "To H—— with you, and give us the Lady! She saved my boy's life!" And then they all invited poor Mr. Brownlow to seek a warmer climate in a loud chorus.

"Where was Madge?" Ned interrupted, sharply.

"Madge and Rose kept their distance," Will replied. "They didn't want it to be said that they had whipped up the gathering—and Rose," he added, with a brother's experience, "was quite capable of it!"

"Old Brownlow got mightily scared," he went on, with keen relish. "He couldn't arrest anyone there and then, for he had no men. They got hold of the coachman, and then prepared to duck him in the pond, and they would have done it, only the Mother made herself visible, and stopped it. She got Brownlow to let her get out on to the step, and he was right thankful to get behind her—He was as likely as not to get a ducking himself if the mob got at him.

"You should have seen the Mother," Will said. "She mounted the box so as to be seen and heard—Poor Mr. Brownlow helped her up himself.—Oh, it was mighty! and then she talked to the people in just her best manner—as natural as possible, and they heard every word, too. The Mother ought to be in Parliament, like the old abbesses!—'Men,' said she, 'I pray you don't injure the poor coachman. He has done no harm, neither has my host, Mr. Brownlow, who has shown me great courtesy while I have been in his charge. I go now to Lewes Jail to stand on my trial for teaching the children, whom I feed, to serve God and honour the King. I bring up good honest subjects of His Majesty, whom God bless. I teach my charges to love their neighbour by precept and example, so far as lies in my power. The King has no hand in my prose-

cution, nor Mr. Brownlow, who but does his duty. It is the law, made by a Parliament, which despises the King, that prosecutes women who live according to the faith that is in them. Remember, that when they tell you that our England is a free country!’ Mr. Brownlow intervened here,” Will said, with a chuckle. “It wasn’t quite his politics. ‘Tell them to release my coachman, Madam,’ he said, ‘and cease this speech-making, which is not seemly in one of your sex.’

“The Mother flashed out at him, in her quick way.

“‘Then let one of more suitable sex protect the coachman,’ but she turned to the crowd and bade them let the man go. Four huge brutish fellows had got hold of him, and seemed likely to hold on, but they dropped him like a log, when she cried, ‘Let go!’ with her eyes blazing.

“They allowed the postillion to remount, and got the coachman back into his box. He drove off while the mob shouted, ‘God bless the Lady! and to H—— with her enemies!’ I saw it all,” Will said, “it was magnificent!”

William Throckmorton was as pessimistic as to the result of the trial as the others had been. It seemed that the mentally defective youth, who was to be called as a witness, had been found speaking wildly seditious things about the King, and these, he insisted on saying, he had been taught at Wildwood by Mistress Tyrwhit. To this tissue of falsehoods—the falsehoods that a feeble mind is so prone to invent—he added certain facts gathered during his sojourn at Wildwood, which, innocuous in themselves, yet served to give the colour of truth to the whole. “The Mother *would* do it,” Will Throckmorton groaned. “Father Ireland warned her at the time that the wretch was a dangerous epileptic with vicious propensities; that kind invariably invent charges against the people who look after them—but she wouldn’t listen. The boy was an under-dog—He was being bullied at home—and so she took him instead of one of his healthy brothers and sisters. The Mother was very self-willed about it. Still, if she didn’t do those sort of things, she wouldn’t be the Mother,” he added with a smile. “It’s going to cost her dear this time, though.

Shaftesbury is behind it all, and he is working this youth's evidence for all it is worth. He loathes the Mother—Brownlow is absolutely his creature, and so is Scroggs, the Chief Justice—they are both his pensioners.”

“But the King will not permit it,” Ned cried. “How could he?”

“The King is Parliament's pensioner,” William Throckmorton said, grimly.

CHAPTER XX

ON the day of the Assizes Ned was prevented from dwelling unduly on the momentous events in progress by a sufficiently exciting diversion. His Majesty the King sent over and "borrowed" Mr. Treasurer's under-clerk. Ned was conducted to the royal presence by his chief himself, and straitly warned not to gossip of his personal attendance on His Majesty as the knowledge might lead to much jealousy and ill-feeling.

Charles was alone in what was known as his laboratory, a closet where he amused himself with making chemical experiments. A smaller closet led out of it. The King greeted his borrowed clerk with great affability. He began by chatting about Paris and asking Ned questions about his life there, and testing his qualifications as acquired in the Ambassador's service.

"Now, let me see," said he, "Have they taught you the whole duty of a secretary? Can you, by example, write vanishing letters?"

The other looking blankly mystified, the king was pleased to explain.

"Your education has been much neglected," he said. "Have you never learnt that characters written with a preparation of lime juice will most conveniently fade away in the course of a few days?"

Ned had not heard of this. He wondered vaguely if His Majesty was pulling his leg. The other continued:

"And have they not taught you how to write incriminating letters in double lines so that they read quite innocently?"

Ned had not heard this either. His education had indeed been sadly neglected.

"It takes some ingenuity," the king said. "'Tis a form of literary composition that requires practice, but you should be able to manage it. It's a department of secretarial work that a really efficient clerk should be able to undertake." Ned was still dubious as to whether the King was joking or not.

The merry monarch took pen and paper and proceeded to give an example of his meaning. He wrote something which he bade Ned read aloud. It ran as follows:—

I met King Carrabas
With Mr. Edward Coleman
Who hath lent me a hundred pounds
Which I had need of
Mr. Coleman is in high feather because he
Hath heard that the ghost of Oliver Cromwell
Hath murdered the Lord Chancellor.

"Now read the alternate lines," the King said.
Ned did so:

I met King Carrabas
Who hath lent me a hundred pounds
Mr. Coleman is in high feather because he
Hath murdered the Lord Chancellor.

The king watched Ned's face quizzically. "It's quite easy when you get the knack," he observed. Ned was still perplexed as whether he was meant to laugh or not. He decided to remain serious.

"I shall soon learn to do it," he said, playing up to his enigmatical instructor. "It should be an amusing pastime."

"Have you got a sweetheart?" the King asked suddenly.

Our hero blushed quite prettily. "I am betrothed to Mistress Margaret Tyrwhit, Her Majesty's maid of honour," he replied.

The King frowned. "Is that what made you join the Catholic Church?" he asked, with a very nasty sneer.

"No, Sir," Ned answered. "When I joined the Catholic Church I was under the impression that Mistress Tyrwhit was vowed to the cloister, and had she not been I should

have embraced the celibate life myself, only the Capuchins would have none of me."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Coleman," the King said. "I feared me that you were not an honest man after all—and that after I had taught you to write vanishing letters and non-incriminating documents!" He was whimsical again. There was that in the merry monarch that disarmed the honest critic. He cut the ground from under the moralist's feet with a quip at his own expense and an impudent appreciation of the other's ethical standard. "But," he went on, "you must not let this sweetheart of yours worm any secrets out of you—she must read the double lines along with the rest of the world."

Ned assured His Majesty that his secrets would rank with the things unspoken. Very fervently he made the promise.

"Good!" His Majesty said. "Now we will get to work."

He threw Ned some papers containing the rough notes of letters to be written to a certain Mons. le Brun at the court of the French king. They were chiefly concerning money transactions of the meaning of which Ned could form no idea. He wrote them out in due form, and in the flowery style of which he was rather proud, and presented the copies to the king for his signature.

"Sign them with your own name," the King said, and scrutinized his "Whipping boy's" face shrewdly as he did so.

"Shall I add, then, 'on behalf of your Majesty?'" the private Secretary asked.

"Sign your own name," the king repeated, and Ned signed it—Edward Coleman. Written on the — day of August, 1669.

He had entered upon his secretarial career.

The King's "laboratory" was invaded in the course of the morning by various visitors. When this happened Ned was dismissed into the inner closet. Only one exception was made to this. Charles did not find it necessary to hide his new secretary from his brother, the Duke of York, who was one of the visitors.

"This is Mr. Coleman," he said, introducing Ned. "He has come here to amuse me with the latest Paris scandals. He has been for five years at the Embassy."

The Duke differed from his brother in every respect. He possessed no complexity of character. A certain frankness which expressed itself with the bluntness of an unimaginative nature made his manners less attractive than those of his royal brother. The Duke surveyed Ned curiously, but had no apt remark to make to suit the occasion. He became obviously interested however, when Charles remarked that Mr. Coleman had been ill-advised enough to join the papists for conscientious reasons. His rather dull face lighted up—it was rumoured that the Duchess of York had been privately received into the Catholic communion, and that the Duke was likely to follow in her steps. "You have the courage of your convictions," he said, and his tone had a certain blunt kindliness about it; nevertheless our hero was not greatly taken with the Duke of York.

"Of all the things invented by the priests a conscience is the most reprehensible," the king said. "It even interferes with the enjoyment of one's love affairs—not with the love affairs themselves, of course."

The Duke flushed. His love affair with Miss Jennings was much talked about just then. Ned felt somehow that the King resented the Duke's inconsistency, for his religious tendency was well-known, as much as any Catholic could have done. He wondered, did His Majesty really wish to be convinced of the truth of the faith by the lives of its exponents? He felt singularly irritated with his Royal Highness the Duke of York, he seemed likely to prove a spoke in the wheel of the Plot Magnificent.

The King dismissed Ned after the Duke's visit, and so his first official morning spent with His Majesty, strictly under the rose, terminated.

For the rest of the day he could think of nothing but the event in process at Lewes. On the morrow he would have news. He wondered if His Majesty would borrow him again next day. It all seemed like a dream, both his good fortune, the tragedy in Sussex, and his engagement.

Three overwhelming things, and, underlying all, this discovery which gave a new meaning to life—the solution of the secret of Wildwood, its magic, its peace, its blithesomeness, and the necessary—the seemly and essential—note of suffering. Who could picture Wildwood, prosperous and lacking the hazard, and yet retaining its spell? Yes, the only thing that mattered, the thing to which his success with the King ministered, which sanctified his love as well as his ambition, was the vision which is the Catholic faith. The light, whose rays, poured forth, touch the crosses of the world with the glamour of burnished gold.

Our hero would have been an ungenerous poltroon, unworthy of a chronicle, if he had done otherwise than apply himself to the sharing of his discovery with others, to the assiduous fabrication, in fact, of the "Plot Magnificent."

It happened that His Majesty did borrow Ned again next day. This time he kept him busily employed in making hasty copies in shorthand of certain papers, which My Lord Shaftesbury had left for his perusal. They were not in the Laboratory to-day. Ned, dismissed as before, into an inner room, heard Charles returning the papers to the messenger with the comment, "I've glanced over them, tell My Lord Shaftesbury, but I can't be plagued with these dull haggings—he must see to it."

Ned longed to approach the King on the subject of Mistress Tyrwhit, but he had prudence enough to feel that it would not do for the new secretary to encroach on his position. Charles was in his best vein this morning. He encouraged his secretary to talk, and was himself entirely natural. He asked, among others, many questions about the Blue nuns in Paris, whose house Ned had visited on a commission from Queen Catherine.

"I'm told," Charles remarked, "that they pray for me still before the Blessed Sacrament every Friday—they told me that they would when I was there as a boy."

Ned's heart began to thump. Here, indeed, was the Plot Magnificent in working! He was almost tempted to mention Mistress Tyrwhit. She had met the King at

these same Blue nuns' convent. He had, in fact, started to do so, when they were interrupted by a messenger bearing a missive for His Majesty. It was Mr. Chiffinch, who bore all the secrets of the Royal household in his bosom, so he was permitted to see the new secretary. Ned by no means blessed the untimely interruption when he had all but gained his point.

The King turned the portentous-looking missive over. He threw it to Ned. "Open it, and tell me what it is," he yawned. "The magistrates hunting out some of your kind. If I mistake not, it is from a puppy-magnate who fancies himself at that game."

Ned broke the seal, and opened the missive. He started to read it aloud, as commanded. It ran as follows:—

"We are happy to inform your Majesty that, at the Assizes this day, the —th of August, 1660, at the town of Lewes, in the County of Sussex, Mr. Justice Scroggs passed sentence of death on Mistress Tyrwhit of Wildwood, in the County of Sussex, for obstinate and contumacious acts of recusancy, and for the teaching of treasonable and seditious doctrines to the youth of the country side, which latter hath been amply proven from the evidence of one Jasper Haynes, a youth once domiciled at Wildwood, in the County of Sussex, the residence of the said Mistress Tyrwhit, and instructed by the said Mistress Tyrwhit and the Jesuits harboured by her in the abominations of the popish religion, in which are included murder, sedition and other vile—"

The King lifted his hand.

"Stop!" he shouted.

Ned was reading perfectly mechanically. He heard someone else's voice reading the hideous document in perfectly clear, hard, dry tones. It might be said to have been well delivered. For himself, he was conscious only that his heart had turned into a leaden lump, while his head had become uncommonly light.

"Go and sit down," the King said hoarsely, and Ned went and sat down.

"Sentence of death!" The hideous, the egregious words

boomed in his ears. It was unthinkable! Why, no priest, even, had been actually put to death for many years past. They could not do this to a woman! He began to feel a little better. No doubt it was a matter of form. It was intended to frighten the culprit, not actually to take effect. Ned felt his senses coming back. He felt much better. The man who sat opposite him at this very moment would know how to take the cowardly judicial threat for what it was worth. He looked across at the King.

His Majesty's face had become ashen grey in hue. Ned had never seen such an expression on any man's face before.

"D—— the devils!" he muttered, under his breath, "so that was their game."

"Of course, your Majesty will revoke the sentence?" Ned commented. It went without saying, but something had to be said.

The King's face became terrible to see. Grim, sinister, with a kind of glare in his eyes, like an animal in a trap.

He turned with sudden fury on the speaker.

"His Majesty is not to be dictated to by a page-boy," he retorted. "The sentence will be carried out. Don't hold any false ideas about that. And why on earth she should object, I can't see, or her friends either? Isn't the blood of the martyrs the seed of the Church?"

It was said so unspeakably bitterly that Ned was almost terrified. The King shaped his mouth into a smile that was even more sinister than his scowl. "You shall go down and see her to-morrow, and bear her my congratulations," he said. "Women have hitherto, with a few exceptions, been exempt from the privilege of martyrdom. My Lord Shaftesbury is acting with great chivalry, for once in a way."

The hideousness of the King's mood struck Ned speechless. Somehow, he, even now, felt he ought to be sorry for the man before him. Charles Stuart took such extraordinary ways of hiding himself. This, at any rate, was not callousness, but there was no doubting his word when

he said that the sentence would be carried out. Charles was sincere — ah, Heaven! how horribly sincere!

“Get along now,” the King said, “and tell them to send me Nelly. I’m damnably bored.”

“His Majesty has *ennui*, and requires the attendance of Mistress Eleanor Gwynne,” Ned told Mr. Chiffinch. And so his second morning spent in the secret service of the King ended.

CHAPTER XXI

MR. TREASURER held out no hope of a reprieve to Ned. He had also received the news and was grieved beyond expression. "We shall lose one of the noblest women in England," he said. "This is Shaftesbury's doing. He is astute enough to know the part a magnificent woman like that can play in the enemy's service. The king has no option—in fact I believe they are trying to trap him into an act of clemency of that kind for their own ends. It is quite possible that my Lord Shaftesbury has got Mistress Tyrwhit sentenced solely with that purpose."

Later in the day there came a special messenger bearing a letter from Madge. A brave, undismayed letter. The Lady of Wildwood had done her great heart credit in her spirited defence. Margaret recounted it all to her lover—how Ned longed to hold the writer in his arms as he read the calmly-written narrative and realised the restraint that his gentle betrothed was putting on herself. If only he had her head on his shoulder. The mother had remained calm, and perfect mistress of herself, Madge wrote. She had repeated what she had said to the people on the village green in the same simple, straightforward manner. The evidence has been an abominable tissue of lies that bore a horrible and astonishing resemblance to truth because the witness, the feeble-minded lad, befriended at Wildwood, had interpolated a number of actual facts, and repeated little sayings spoken in jest by Father Ireland and others, giving them a false interpretation. Among other things the youth declared that he had overheard the inmates of Wildwood hatching a big plot in the woods. "Oh, Ned," Madge wrote, "that must have been you and me that dear afternoon when we planned the campaign of prayer!" The judge, with an amazing

ignorance of the peculiarities of the feeble-minded, had pointed out that the witness was not clever enough to have invented his story, and this was accepted by the jury as a proof conclusive that the monstrous charges of treasonable plotting, murder, conspiracies, etc., were true.

The mother had received her sentence beautifully. She had stood there, grave, dignified, and perfectly unruffled. "I had always feared that this privilege could not be mine on account of my sex," she had said, with her serene smile, "and I thank the judge for his courtesy to a woman who has been debarred from the making of the law of the land." Ned noted as he read this how the Mother's wit was akin to the King's. Was there really an affinity between these two opposites?

They had allowed Madge to remain with the Mother. She and Rose had a lodging near the Jail, and John Mitton was also lying in the town until—"It's to be in three days' time," the letter said, "and there is no hope, they say, of a reprieve, but pray, pray, pray! Oh, Ned! I can write no more, my heart has given out!"

So the letter ended.

Ned, his mind still acting as in a dream, reckoned that in three days' time would mean the day after to-morrow. Mercifully the very hideousness of the thing made it impossible to realise. It was impossible, too, to give up entire hope that the king would intervene. Ned wondered, in an agony of longing, if the king had really meant it when he had said that he should employ him to ride down to Lewes and convey his congratulations to the condemned woman. Oh, but to see her once again! and to comfort Madge during those terrible hours!

Our hero passed the next morning in an agony of suspense, waiting for the hoped for summons from his Majesty. The drastic sentence on Mistress Tyrwhit was the prevailing subject for conversation. The street ballad-sellers had even got an effusion printed with an accompanying wood-cut. Ned saw it as he passed along Pall Mall and turned violently sick. What masterpiece of the devil was it that could cause this absolute upside-

downness in the world? Perhaps in the days of early Christianity it had been something the same, when unspeakable crimes were credited to the followers of the God-Man. How the devil hated the things that were pure and holy, gentle and of good report! How this Protestant England hated them, knowing not what it hated! Was ever a country in so pitiful a plight?

It was getting near noon when Mr. Coleman at length received a summons from His Majesty. Charles wore his usual mask expression. He scrutinised his sub-rosa secretary's face keenly. It may be taken that Ned showed evident signs of the mental anguish that he was going through. He also wore a mask, however. Perhaps the mask appealed to Charles more than any emotion would have done.

"Are you fretting about Mistress Tyrwhit?" he asked, not unkindly. "You are betrothed to her niece, are you not?"

Ned bowed his head. Then he lifted it suddenly.

"It is the most devilish barbarous thing that has been done," he blurted out, defiantly. "It is a crying shame to England and to all in authority. Your Majesty may hang me with Mistress Tyrwhit for saying this."

He pulled up. He could not hear his own mouth pronouncing the form of death without a shudder. It, in common parlance, "knocked him sideways."

Mr. Edward Coleman, Secretary, was very very near to losing his dignity and behaving like a page-boy!

The king sat thinking for quite a long time. Then he got up and walked to a bureau in the corner. He unlocked it and took out some papers and brought them forward.

"Sit down," he said to Ned. "Now, read these. They are private documents. Can I still count on your fealty, or have I forfeited it?" The secretary took the paper as he was bidden, and perused it mechanically.

It was a form of contract by which my lords X, Y, and Z agreed to lend the sum of £30,000 to his Majesty on the understanding that his Majesty refrained from

exercising his royal prerogative of reprieving from the sentence of death any condemned persons unless agreeable to the afore-named Lords X, Y, and Z. The contract to hold good until his Majesty chose to refund the loan. It was dated but a few days back. The king watched Ned's face grimly.

"I have spent that £30,000" he said, "and I can't get it back. The lady of Wildwood is even more expensive than Barbara Castlemaine."

It was an ugly jest and a bitter one, but Ned forgave the King. "You see," his Majesty went on, "I have made you keeper of my royal conscience. Everything you have from me is under the seal of confession. I'm a fool I know, but any rate you will not think now that I am letting a woman be done to death for the sheer pleasure of it. The King of England cannot find £30,000 at a moment's notice."

"I am honoured by your majesty's confidence," Ned stammered. He saw the hopelessness of the position now. He could not but be touched by the king's confession. It was indeed a mean and sordid thing, this sale of his royal prerogative of mercy—it showed eloquently the straits that England's titular monarch had been driven to, this first "private treaty" that Ned Coleman was made acquainted with—but the king had preferred to own up to this pitiful piece of political trafficking rather than let his new secretary carry a false impression with regard to his share in Mistress Tyrwhit's plight. Perhaps he felt more drawn to the king at that moment, when he was exhibiting this act of unkingliness, this singularly ignoble piece of barter, than he had ever done before, albeit that it spelt the veritable death sentence of the Lady of Wildwood. There was no need of words. The two understood each other perfectly. Charles Stuart, the dissembler, the man who deliberately baffled the judgment of his friends and the criticisms of his counsellors, was fain to make himself known to this ingenuous boy. He who took a sardonic delight in making inferior men believe him

to be evil was lief that this whole-hearted youth should not think too badly of him.

"You shall ride to Lewes, and convey a message from me to Mistress Tyrwhit—my congratulations—" the King said. He said it kindly, gravely, and reverently. "Now go—and God bless you, Ned."

A few hours later Mr. Coleman received a sealed missive to be conveyed to Mistress Clare Tyrwhit in Lewes Jail.

Only a miracle could save the Mother now, but the perpetrators of the Plot Magnificent had not ceased to pray. They had been praying while Ned discoursed with His Majesty, and when His Majesty sat deliberating after his secretary's departure, taking counsel of his lap-dog, they were praying still.

Ned felt quite genuinely grateful for the King's small mercy, to wit, the granting of this opportunity for being near Madge at the hour of her trial. It was an act of consideration eminently characteristic of Charles Stuart, this furnishing a pretext whereby to enable the young man to take leave of the condemned lady, to whom his clemency could not conveniently be extended. Ned posted to his destination at top speed, and by changing horses reached Lewes fairly early in the evening. The execution would take place next morning. The castle was used as the common jail, and Ned rode straight up to its gate. An icy horror seized hold of him as he realised that it was in the castle grounds that to-morrow's unthinkable tragedy would take place. He pictured the condemned cell, its gloom and silence. Would it be possible to converse in the ordinary way of ordinary topics, in the face of the great Topic?—and yet how was he to approach the latter, and how, oh how, was he to say "Good-bye?" There would be Madge's distress to witness, too. He could promise to be her sturdy protector, but at the present juncture he seemed inclined to look upon himself as an interloper. Perhaps, after all, Madge would rather have had her last hours with the Mother to herself?

He stabled his steed at the adjacent inn, and approached the jail. He was duly admitted. The nature of his com-

mission was strictly private. He had been instructed to figure merely as a friend of the condemned lady's.

The Governor was a quaint looking, wizened little man, with a high, thin voice, and very mild manners.

"Mistress Tyrwhit bears up wonderfully well," he said. "She has been accorded various privileges. She begged to be allowed to have access to the common prison. I cannot say why. The two priests imprisoned there had been permitted to visit her in her cell—and an old Franciscan maniac, who is a friend of hers—and this permission has also been granted." The worthy Governor had done his very best by Mistress Tyrwhit.

A jailor was told off to conduct Ned to the condemned cell. The moment they were clear of the Governor's presence a change came over the countenance of the turnkey. He grinned widely, and treated Ned to a remarkably expressive wink. "You won't find the lady in her cell," he remarked, "but I'll take you to her all the same, only"—he paused and puckered his brow with a confected expression of perplexity—" 'tis a risk—everyone I take there, 'tis a risk."

Ned was mystified, but he had no difficulty in taking the obvious hint. He promptly offered the man of keys a gold piece. The latter accepted it approvingly. "She's a strange lady," he said, with the swift confidence of the tipped official. "You'll see her all right, I make no doubt, but you'll be surprised." A horrible creepiness overtook Ned. What was he being prepared for by this hardened custodian of prisoners and captives?

Both Madge and the Governor had reassured him that the Mother was decently housed, but they were traversing a long, dank passage, and evil-smelling to the last degree! They arrived at length at a barred door, from which there came the evil smell in concentrated essence. This door the turnkey proceeded to unlock, remarking as he did so, "if this were known I'd be a ruined man."

Ned stepped in and found himself in a large dimly lighted vault, the atmosphere of which was so absolutely overpowering that he instinctively took a step backwards.

A long, rough table run down the centre of the room, and, seated or standing, at this was a motley and extremely unappetizing company of assorted riff-raff, as Will Throckmorton would have called it.

Begrimed and tattered men and women, of an appearance that beggars description, were engaged in devouring—one uses the term advisedly—food, which had been spread on the table, which, in extraordinary contrast to its surroundings, had been covered with a cloth of spotless whiteness.

At the end of this table, presiding over the amazing banquet, stood the Lady of Wildwood, her eyes fixed with their gentlest expression on the semi-human assembly. The lady of the pitiable plight was evidently enjoying herself mightily! Margaret, Rose, and Phyllis, dainty and as incongruous as the angel who visited St. Peter in prison, flitted about handing food to the guests, who grabbed at it with unwashed and claw-like hands, yet maintained a decorum that was little short of a miracle, considering the conditions, and the dehumanizing circumstances in which they had their being. As there were not enough stools to go round, the women were seated, and the men standing. Among the guests Ned had already recognised old Brother Giles, the incorrigible mendicant, and, moreover, a sudden assault on to his person brought into notice the now ancient and decrepit, but ever genial “Waggaboney,” companion still of his master’s vicissitudes.

CHAPTER XXII

NED stood stock still surveying the scene. The Mother had not yet seen him. As she stood there, her beautiful face more worn than ever but wearing its happiest expression, he could not but make a mental picture of the scene. Someone touched him from behind. It was Rose. She seemed to take his arrival as a matter of course. She smiled at him almost gaily. "The Mother is perfectly happy," she said, "she has found the lamest dogs in England. This feast is in honour of to-morrow." None but Rose could have mentioned the morrow, but Mistress Rose had a perspective all of her own. Heaven was as real to her as Italy. The tears were standing in her eyes, all the same. It was not Mistress Rose's feelings that were at fault. Just then the hostess caught sight of her new guest. She, like Rose, showed no surprise but beckoned to him, smiling. Her presence was needed at the table lest the wild animal should break out in the company which she had tamed with her gentle eyes.

"We are having a glorious feast," she added, exactly in her old, bright way. "Madge and Rose brought the meats and made the table brave. The Governor hasn't been told—we are breaking prison law." She smiled roguishly, "and we are all enjoying ourselves. It is excellent fun breaking bad laws."

Ned could only hold the thin hand offered to him and try to return the smile. "Go and help Madge," the hostess said, "she is being importuned by yonder poor soul who has lost his wits in Jail. But don't you admire our manners? I have taught the men to give up their seats to the ladies."

Ned fled to Madge's rescue. He could vow that the spirit of Wildwood had invaded this unspeakable place.

He knocked up against John Mitton bearing off a dish, and the Lady shook her head at him in mock reproof as the contents scattered themselves on the ground.

It was a strange meeting for the lovers. Ned had dreaded it almost as much as he had longed for it. But this was totally and absolutely different from what he had been picturing. Madge had taken the cue magnificently from her Superior. She greeted Ned as gaily as though they both were at a Court Ball. "It was the Mother's idea," she told him, when he had succeeded in disengaging the attentions of the aged imbecile whose reiterated blessings had become an embarrassment. "She got permission to visit the common prison, and then this notion came to her of bribing the jailor to let us give this feast. The Mother has become friends with all the prisoners since she has been here—she has spent most of her time here, as Rose says 'beguiling God's image back to these poor objects.' Do you see those two yonder?"—she indicated two unkempt figures—"those are priests. They have to be here always with the others. They had almost lost heart and were becoming like the rest," (she shuddered), "but the Mother had one in to hear her confession, and she heartened him up until he seems to have quite recovered his manhood. The other said Mass in her cell this morning. We fetched the sacred vessels from Wildwood. That woman over there killed her baby, but the Mother has brought her soul back to life by talking to her about little children. Ned! It's *wonderful*!" She stopped speaking. A sudden lull had fallen on the buzz of voices which had arisen when the business of eating had become less absorbing. The Mother was standing up in her place, and all eyes had become suddenly fixed on her. She had succeeded in gaining their attention by some method of her own.

"My fellow-prisoners," she began, in quick, clear tones that were audible to all, yet perfectly conversational and natural, "you will all have heard that I am to die to-morrow." She paused. Every face was turned towards the speaker. A hush fell over the assembly, and someone

gave a deep groan. Then the quavering voice of old Giles cried out, "*Laus Deo!*" and "Waggaboney," swept the ungarnished floor with his mangy tail.

The speaker smiled across at the 'old man. "That's right," she said, "*Laus Deo*—the Lord be praised! I thought perhaps," she went on, "that some of you might think that I ought not to be merry-making on my last evening instead of saying my prayers and confessing my sins?" She paused again, and her serene gaze travelled over the fierce, distorted countenances.

A look of curiosity came into some which even her previous announcement had not stirred to a display of interest. "Well, I have said my prayers all my life," she went on, "and my sins lie too heavy on my soul to leave the confessing of them to the last minute—I shall plead again to-night for mercy, but meanwhile I am having a merry-making because I am going home to my Native Country.—I must have my merry-making." She smiled again, and the hardened countenances, so long out of practice, perforce followed suit. The room liked the note of defiance.

"My dear companions," she cried, with sudden zest, "I want you all to see how happy I am! You know that I am going out of this world to-morrow. They have found me guilty of crimes I never committed, but I am guilty of being a Catholic, as well as a loyal subject of his Majesty, so it seems the world is safer without me—but enough of that. What I want you to remember is that Clare Tyrwhit was a gay woman when she faced death." She looked round and caught the eye of a scowling dark-faced southerner who, the priest had told her, was an Italian whose belief in God had been destroyed by the miseries of a long and unjust imprisonment. "Do you know how an exile feels," she continued, "when he is told that he may return to his native country? Well, that is how I feel now that I am going to my native land."

"I go to my native land,"—she repeated the words in Italian, fixing her eyes on the scowling face with the bright challenge of perfect faith. "There are two priests

among you," she said, "who will show you the way to that beloved country." And then she stopped. She would not push her point, only indicate it—her friends, listening, marvelled at her restraint. "Now," she said "let us not forget that we are merry-making. To-morrow you will pray for me. To-night we will sing a song."

Old Giles lifted up his voice a second time. "*Laus Deo!*" he shouted, and Jacopone gave a little delighted bark.

She proceeded to name a song, popular, but free from the ribaldry that pervaded most of the popular ballads of the day. It was sung to a tune that later came to be adapted to the Jacobite "Skye Boat Song." It was a simple enough ballad with the last couplet of the refrain running,

"Carry me home to the land of my heart
And the love that is mine evermore."

Mistress Rose started the solo verse in the rich contralto that Ned connected with the Laudes at Wildwood. The swing of the melody was irresistible. By the end of the third verse the entire company had taken up the refrain, the Mother beating time with her hand. "Sing!" she said to the others, and they all joined in, as in duty bound—Madge and Ned, Phyllis, and John Mitton, till the vaults rang with the sounds of their revelry.

But it was not to be expected that such an unseemly state of things could continue without interference. The sound of revelry by night reached the Governor's ears. He hastened to the Common prison from whence the disturbance came. The state of that worthy's mind can hardly be described when the scene presented itself to his amazed eyes. There was no sign of disorder, of the ordinary features of corousing. The music that greeted his ears was melodious, and no grave fault could be found with its rendering, for the simple reason that the rhythm was preserved by the time-beat given by a figure standing at the head of the long table, at whose side a tall, very beautiful girl stood leading the singing with uncommon zest in a voice of extraordinary beauty. The change that

had come over the prisoners was a thing wonderful, almost uncanny! No longer savage and hardly tamer than wild bearts, they stood or sat like ordinary human beings, their faces lighted once more with a glimmer of the divine spark. The Mother had indeed beguiled back to them the obliterated image of God, albeit with a song secular and unseemly.

The Governor was quite frankly shocked. It seemed to be the Notorious Lady's fate to outrage the better feelings of officials of irreproachable bringing up. The unseemliness of this roystering on the very night before death affected the Governor even more than the contumacious ignoring of the prison rule. He had credited the Notorious Lady with a certain amount of religious feeling, of a mistaken kind, no doubt

"Madam!" he gasped, when he had found his voice, "I am amazed at this, this extraordinary profanity! this indecent levity! Why are you not in your cell preparing to meet your Judge and seeking mercy on your misdeeds instead of indulging in this unseemly mirth and ribaldry?"

"Our mirth has not been unseemly," the lady answered, cheerfully. "I have been praying, and I shall pray again, but I wished to give my friends here a happy evening. Do you not know, Sir, that the children of St. Francis hold that mirth is good and holy. There has been no ribaldry in our mirth to-night. I am teaching them, poor souls, to be happy in the thought of the next world, for assuredly they have no happiness in this one which uses them so ill."

"That was no spiritual song that you were singing," the Governor said, severely.

"It was the song of the poor exile returning home to his country," the lady replied. "I am an exile returning to my country, so it suits the occasion well enough, and it is a very holy strain since it has made these unhappy folk look up from their misery. Pray listen for yourself, Sir, and see how well my pupils sing"—and before he could protest the lady had lifted her hand and with an upward wave re-started the chorus.

Even the Governor's presence failed to check the volume of melody. The irresistible ditty pealed out once more.

"Many of these had forgotten that they could speak, much less sing," the Mother said, triumphantly smiling at the embarrassed listener. "Now, tell me, is there aught unseemly in having achieved this little last something to take before the Judge?"

The Governor scratched his chin. He was an honest man, and not unkindly, nor lacking in intelligence, withal. The taming of these rough and brutal specimens of humanity was in itself almost a miracle. He had hitherto looked upon the prisoner in his charge as simple mischievous beasts to be kept chained and guarded. This woman's energetic personality had laid bare a possibility that had never before so much as occurred to him.

"Well, Madam," he said, by no means unkindly, "it certainly lies with you to arrange the spending of your last hours as you think best according to your lights, but I must request you to return to your cell. This breach of discipline may stir up the spirit of mutiny in the jail, but I do not charge you with having that in your mind."

Mistress Tyrwhit assented without demur. "It is owing to your courtesy," she said, "that I have been able to enjoy the society of my fellow-prisoners, and I do apologise most humbly if I have taken undue advantage of that clemency." She turned to bid them good-night. "I have a few favourites," she said. "May I just give them a separate word?" He could not well refuse, so he stood watching the frail, majestic figure cross the vile apartment, and pass from one to the other like a Court lady among her guests. He saw the tears in their eyes, and heard the groans of the unhappy creatures as they took leave of this prison angel.

"I shall see Brother Giles in the morning," she said. "He is such a very old friend." She even had a word for "Waggaboney." "Good faithful doggie," she said. "You will have pleasant dreams in your long sleep, for I think you will be faithful unto death!"

The three ladies, with Ned and John Mitton, followed

her out of the noisome chamber, thankful to get once more into the better atmosphere of the corridor, which was merely musty. At the door of her cell the Mother bade Ned good-night. "I shall see you, too, in the morning," she said. The ladies were for remaining with her for a while longer, but she sent them off, too. "I want to be alone," she said, and they understood. Mistress Tyrwhit had sung her song. The time had now come to pray.

An hour later, Ned, seated in his hired chamber, turning over the events of the evening in his mind, since sleep was impossible, suddenly came across something carefully stowed away in his pocket.

It was the King's letter to Mistress Tyrwhit!

He sat staring feebly at it as it lay in his hand. He had completely forgotten to deliver the message, for which purpose he had ridden from London to Lewes! The oversight was characteristic. It was exactly what Burnt Ely would have expected of him. Ned felt, taking a mild and far-away interest in this new episode, that John Mitton would never have done a thing like this. He, Edward Coleman, was certainly an unutterably futile ass! It had come about through the unconventional nature of the Mother's leave-taking. She had been so absorbed in attending to her guests that he had scarcely had a word with her. Perhaps there was some excuse for him, after all? And the message, too, was only a pretext for sending him to Sussex. Ned turned it over in his hand and wondered vaguely what it contained. Had the King really offered his cynical congratulations to the successor of Perpetua and Agnes? Perhaps if he had he was not so far wrong. What the Governor had referred to as the "indecent levity" of the evening's proceedings was no bravado. The magnificent game of play had been perfectly genuine, and how the King would have loved to have been there!—Or had he written to ask forgiveness for his share in the foul business, and, perhaps—the thought made Ned's heart jump—to confess a secret sympathy with the cause for which the Lady was suffering? With this latter idea Ned fell to

blaming himself vigorously. Had his carelessness delayed such a message as that? For, of course, now it could not be delivered until the morning. In the face of the coming tragedy, such a detail, however, as the omission to deliver a royal message could only count as a trifle. Had the missive been irrevocably lost or destroyed instead of merely delayed in transit, it would not have made much difference—but to have deprived the Mother of such a solace as this letter might contain was a grave matter. Ned felt that he had put the top stone on to his misery. It was an elvish trick for Fate to play on him at this juncture. "Why," he asked bitterly, "had he not been allowed to don the brown habit and follow Brother Juniper of the Friars Minor as his patron saint?"

The next day dawned cloudless, and the country was bathed in superb sunshine as Ned looked out his window towards the Castle. He turned away sick with horror. Men were busy in the castle grounds setting up some kind of wooden erection. It would be ready by 9.30.

He dressed and hastened across to the Jail to deliver his belated commission. He found the condemned Lady in her cell as serene and tranquil as on the previous evening. The others were already with her. "I have heard Mass," she said, "and made my Communion. The Father was able to say it here in my cell, and the Italian came and made his Communion, too; the priest heard his confession in the night—the poor wretch woke him up to hear it." She was gently and quietly happy—like a bride on her wedding morning, who knows that her departure must leave tears in the old home, and who goes out to a happiness not to be shared by the others. It was a quiet, decorous, contentment of spirit, that even the Governor could not have taken exception to.

Ned made haste to deliver his message, explaining how His Majesty had expressed his desire to write a word to the Mother, making it a pretext for granting him this leave of absence.

The condemned Lady took the note quite eagerly. "Who knows," she said, "but that he may have something

to say?" Her pale face lighted up with expectancy—"he may be seeing the light at last!"

She tore it open and perused it rapidly.

The eager look died out of her face and gave way to one of complete and blank dismay. She looked up at the messenger and spoke in a low, husky whisper.

"They are going to reprieve me," she said.

CHAPTER XXIII

THERE was an eloquent silence—everyone had ceased to breathe. Then Phyllis gave a cry, and flung her arms round the Mother's neck. Madge had covered her face with her hands, and was crying softly, "Oh, God, God, God!"

Rose stood like a statue. She made no sound—said nothing. Her eyes were fixed on the Mother, and they shone like stars.

The lady who was to have died simply sat and looked in front of her.

In the way that trivial things have of cropping up on momentous occasions, Ned found himself being reminded of the day when he had broken a platter at Wildwood. He had not seen the Mother look downright cross since then!

"I have been cheated," she ejaculated. "Oh, *how* I have been cheated!"

"To think we might have known it last night!" Phyllis said, but they were too completely happy to reproach the tardy messenger. The paper had fallen from the Mother's hands. Ned picked it up and read the contents as she nodded assent.

"Madam," the King's letter ran, "To-morrow morning, in due time to be effectual, the Governor will receive an order for your release. You will be transported from my realm, under the escort of my agent, Mr. Edward Coleman, to whatsoever place in France or Flanders you may select. Your estate of Wildwood will be confiscated, and passed on to your kinswoman, Margaret Tyrwhit. You will

remain outside the United Kingdom during my royal pleasure.

CHARLES R."

And this curtly worded act of clemency had cost the King £30,000!

But that was Edward Coleman's secret. Even the Mother herself might not know that. It was to be the first of many secrets that he was to hold for the King.

The others had taken complete possession of the Mother. Madge and Phyllis each had a hand, and Rose, standing behind was bestowing caresses on the soft hair of the still drooping head.

"At any rate my children seem satisfied," Mistress Trywhit said, rather reproachfully.

She smiled rather wanly, but her brow had cleared. Their joy which had made them almost beside themselves, could not but touch the gentle heart. Perhaps John Mitton's was the most peculiarly expressed. She held out the hand that held Phyllis's to him and as he grasped it, the stolid John tumbled on to his knees and buried his face in the lady's lap and gave silent vent to an outburst of emotion in the manner of his early infancy when the Mother's lap had been a refuge wherein to indulge feelings of which "Johnnie" was manfully ashamed.

"His Majesty has made me your custodian!" Ned gasped.

"He didn't know then how ill you are to be trusted," the lady replied.

There was still the anxiety as to whether the reprieve had arrived or would arrive in time. Suppose it got delayed, as this other message had done! "I'm glad I didn't know last night," the Mother said. "It would have spoiled my feast. I forgive your carelessness, Ned."

They heard steps approaching. The key was turned in the lock and the Governor entered. He approached

the lady pompously. He was evidently quite pleased with his task.

"Madam," he said, "I have the pleasure of informing you that His Majesty has been graciously pleased to grant you a reprieve. I hold his order in my hand."

The news of the actual arrival of the reprieve was sufficiently a relief to affect the demeanour of his hearers so that the bearer of the good news did not suspect that he had been forestalled. He congratulated the reprieved lady with courtesy and sincerity—the idea of executing a woman of Mistress Tyrwhit's standing had been abhorrent to him. The good news had stunned her, apparently.

She certainly did give the impression of someone who has received a blow. He went on to explain to her that she would be nominally in custody until she left England, and seeing Ned, went on to inform him that he had been selected to take charge of the lady in the interim. He had been advised that Mr. Coleman had not been informed either of the reprieve or of this commission, having left town before the reprieve was issued.

Clare Tyrwhit was too innately unselfish to repine long over her disappointment. There was the sentence of banishment to be faced.

"One thing cheers me up, Ned," she said, "it is the thought that you have been made my gaoler. I could almost forgive the king for reprieving me for the sake of that merry jest."

"He has been making a fool of me all the way through," Ned answered, "but I forgive him freely. To think I never suspected what was inside that letter!"

"I should have suspected a reprieve itself," Madge said. "Ned, you were very dense!"

"He could not justify his lack of suspicion by telling her of the compact by which Mistress Tyrwhit became "more expensive than my Lady Castlemaine" so he bore with the aspersion from the lips of his lady-love.

The news had reached the common jail when they passed out. A coach waited at the gate for Mistress Tyrwhit and her escort, but they had to walk through the

courtyard to get to it. "I have said good-bye," the Mother said. She felt that she could not face the prisoners again. They might even think that she had known all along and had been pretending—acting a part! The common prison had a window giving on to the courtyard and at this a cluster of its inmates had gathered to greet the reprieved prisoner as she passed out. Foremost among them was Brother Giles. Giles was to deliver a little speech and they made way for him accordingly.

The crowd at the window craned their necks. The Lady was approaching. They caught sight of her face and the shout of congratulation died on their lips. The Lady's face was perfectly calm, but written on it was a dejection so unmistakable that the sound died in their throats.

Old Giles thrust his head forward.

"My poor child," he murmured, "God's will be done!"

The Mother looked up at him. She spoke:

"I was not worthy, Brother Giles," they heard her say, and with bent head she continued her way, a ghost of the gay lady of the night before. The Beloved Country was still a long way off.

The crowd turned from its point of vantage, awed and silent. More than one of the captives in that grimy dungeon was feeling genuinely sorry for the prisoner who was going forth to freedom on that matchless summer day.

They drove back to Wildwood. The villagers had received no tidings of the return, so there was no ovation. "A very good thing," Mistress Tyrwhit said, "they might have ducked Ned!"

Old Robin and his wife, and the maids, were naturally beside themselves with joy at the recovery of their mistress. Ned felt unspeakably embarrassed in his character of "man in possession." Charles's sardonic wit could have devised no more whimsical situation. The Mother had recovered her spirits so far as to twit him gently with his duties, and Rose teased him assiduously and without mercy. It was well that they could have a

joke so real and irresistible to fall upon, for the future was sad enough to look forward to. Wildwood's day was over. Robin and his wife might be permitted to stop and look after the place, but no children's voices would ring on the lawns or in the woods. There would be no more *Salut*, and no more skipping matches; and no more saving of the little ones to the faith.

It was arranged that Mistress Tyrwhit should cross to Gravelines with Rose and Phyllis, whither Father Ireland had already made his way, and that the former should carry out her intention of entering the Convent of Poor Clares—the Poor Clares who slept on boards, took but one meal a day, and prayed by day and by night for wandering men. The Community would be only too glad to offer hospitality to Mistress Tyrwhit, through whom so many had been added to their number. After Wildwood, Gravelines would be the Mother's natural home.

It would be Mr. Coleman's duty to escort them thither at His Majesty's charges.

The preparations for evacuating Wildwood were pressed forward without delay. "I must not encroach on the courtesy of my custodian," the Mother said. Ned was beginning to find that the man-in-possession joke was wearing a little thin. It was a grief to him, no less than to the others, to see the uprooting of the home. The discarding of certain treasures, the packing up for transit of others—things holy and precious, not to be abandoned at any cost. Phyllis and Rose were constrained to take a cheerful view of things, remembering what might have been. With the Mother it was different. It seemed that her days of usefulness had been brought to an end, and it was a hard thought for a woman of her temperament. It was the undoing of her life-work as well as exile from her native land.

On the day before they started, Mr. Coleman had an audacious proposal to make. Mistress Margaret had received an extended leave of absence from Her Majesty the Queen, and it had been arranged that she should accompany the others to Gravelines. Ned's proposal was

no other than that the marriage of Mistress Margaret and himself should take place when they reached Gravelines, and Madge return to England as his wife. They could pursue their respective duties at Court. Mr. Coleman felt sure the king would approve. It would be such an effective rounding off of the drama in which his whimsical genius had interested itself.

Rose was infatuated with the idea. "Ned is magnificent!" she declared. "Verily, Mother, I should feel proud to be kept under lock and key by such a man! Let Madge celebrate her nuptials on the same day as mine, and may she be as happy as I mean to be!"

Ned was justified in his anticipations. Things were made perfectly easy for the young couple, a leave of absence sufficient for quite a reasonable honeymoon being granted by their royal employers, Ned's of course, coming ostensibly from Sir Thomas Clifford.

It is not our intention to describe the journey to Flanders—the long business of travelling by road with a quantity of baggage—the embarking, the sea voyage, and the road journey on the other side. People did not look for comfort in travelling in those days, but Ned had the advantage of being an experienced traveller, and he made a most efficient courier. They reached Gravelines, the quaint little lowland town so full of associations for English Catholics, safely and drove up to the Franciscan Convent, and there Ned delivered his charge, not the first Englishwoman whose heart England had not (God forgive her!)—been big enough to hold.

We venture to bring this section of our hero's history to a close with the following picture, presented to the reader with the chronicler's compliments—

It is a glorious early September afternoon. In the by-paths of the grand old garden of the Poor Clares at Gravelines a young couple—a bride and bridegroom, in fact—are wandering. They are free from eavesdroppers and they are interspersing conversation of considerable gravity with the ordinary discourse of lovers. They are speaking of a certain Plot—a magnificent Plot, which is to implicate all

the Catholics in England and many in France. Monks and nuns will be foremost in its activities, and its effect will be an entire upheaval of existing things over in England. The organising of it will take time and much ingenuity, and much care and discretion will have to be observed, but the result will be that England will become Catholic in spite of herself—by sheer force, in fact. A most redoubtable conspiracy this, being thus hatched in a rose-walk by a pair of lovers very obviously in love!

On a rustic seat on the smoothly-kept lawn there is seated a solitary figure garbed in brown. The lady is not a religious. She is wearing a lace mantilla, and she has that air of dignity that a mantilla always enhances. Yet there is something forlorn about her as she sits there quietly reading her Office—a droop perhaps in the graceful figure that is not native to it. The nuns are saying their Office in Chapel, but this lady is not a nun, it seems, and she loves the garden so she is accomplishing the Little Hours out here with the birds who are hopping about at her feet.

It has been a great day to-day. The clothing of a nun, not a remarkable, though a very joyful event, has taken place, and over and above that a wedding, which is quite a novelty, and the next most delightful thing to a clothing. Two fair maidens have donned bridal garb to-day.

She looks up suddenly. Someone is crossing the lawn rapidly from the cloister. It is a tall girl, dressed also in brown, but wearing the cord and veil of the religious. Her veil is white.

She looks so radiant that the other is reminded, as she rises to meet her, of that other maiden who crossed the hills of Judea with eager feet carrying the joy of a new-born happiness.

She takes the other's outstretched hands and kisses them.

"What is this?" she asks, "that the spouse of my Lord should come to me?" smiling on Sister Rose of The Visitation, and the latter answers. "*Magnificat anima mea dominum!*" and peeps with shy happiness into the

other's eyes. "They sent me to you, Mother, because they said you needed cheering," she whispers, "but they knew that I must needs come to you before I could sing my little Magnificat."

The other draws her gently down on to the seat beside her, and so they sit and share their common secret—the secret of the King; reproducing, as it were, the story of the sweetest women's friendship recorded in history—the friendship of Mary and Elizabeth.

PART II

MR. COLEMAN, GENT.

CHAPTER I

WE are proposing to give the reader a few extracts from the Diary of Mr. Edward Coleman, gent, from which the progress of his fortunes during the next few years may be gleaned. Had this Diary been found among the papers which fell into the hands of Mr. Coleman's enemies at a later period, it might have thrown considerable light on a mystery which has successfully baffled historians—to wit, the exact nature of the conspiracy in which Mr. Coleman was engaged between the years 1673 and 1676, which was so obviously hinted at in the correspondence between himself and certain eminent Catholic politicians. This latter correspondence has been preserved and is at the disposal of the serious student of history, who cares to look up the Fitz-Herbert and other MSS. It is, however, the novelist's privilege to step in where the historian—even the biassed historian with a bee in his bonnet—must pull up. Hence the exclusive possession by the present chronicler of "The Diary of Mr. Edward Coleman, gent, sometime Secretary to her Highness the Duchess of York."

Taking the line followed by certain of Mr. Samuel Pepy's editors, we shall merely give extracts from the notes compiled by the ready pen of Mr. Coleman; and we sincerely trust that the reader will bear with them, and not deem them very dull reading, but use his or her sagacity in penetrating the inwardness of certain apparently trivial items. The historical fact that Mr. Coleman retained in his possession copies of correspondence of a particularly dangerous character will justify the romance-maker (ever

grateful for a diary where his characters are concerned) in crediting Mr. Coleman with the indiscretion of committing to writing certain things recorded in his private journal in a cipher, to be sure, the key to which it is the present chronicler's unique privilege to possess.

Extracts from the Diary of Edward Coleman, Gent :—
"1670."

This day Madge and I moved into our new lodgings at Pall Mall, mighty convenient and properly furnished. We have brown hangings to our best chamber and I wear my little habit next my skin lest we forget that we are Franciscans in the midst of this worldliness. Cousin Roger's wife has called on us, and Madge likes her, which has surprised me a little. We will have salt fish for supper, for dinner has been a meal of many courses. Please God we shall be very happy here. 1670

The King has raised my pension (through the Treasurer, who is my nominal master.) I have bought Madge a new silken gown flowered with lilac which has cost me ten pounds. She has scolded me for it but she is not ill-pleased with the gift. The Mother has written to-day from Gravelines. She says that she hungers and thirsts to be back again at Wildwood. She bids me not to mention the "Plot" in my letters when they go through the mails (her letter has come by hand) lest it be misinterpreted. She declares that it is indiscreet to write "that all England is arming for a great campaign," although she admires my literary style in a Secretary (the Mother is the same as ever!) for who would guess that I was but meaning a campaign of prayer? I think that the Mother is over-cautious, but I will be careful in what I set on paper.

—1670

The Plot matures ; a mighty fine conspiracy it has become ! Yesterday I had a Conference with a kinsman of My Lord Shaftesbury and have persuaded him that the logic of our Church cannot be answered. He fears his kinsman or methinks he would be a Catholick to-morrow. Truly we shall soon have all England on our side.

Madge and I have dined sparsely as we have no visitors, but we have opened a bottle of wine, as it is Rose's birthday, and pledged absent friends and the Plot Magnificent — for 'tis Rose and the nuns at Gravelines who are deepest in the making of it.

—1670

I hear My Lord Shaftesbury has been speaking ill of me.

1670 (written in cipher).

Madge has seen my diary and says I ought to write it in cipher. She says there is enough in what I have written to get me hanged and all my friends! She says it be the kind of diary Brother Juniper would have kept, but she kissed the top of my head as I sat a-writing. I am using a cipher to please her. She likes not my periwig so I do not wear it indoors which is also a great economy and more comfortable. The king has borrowed me several times lately. I have done a deal of writing for him. It all works towards the Plot. H.M. is anxious to be on terms with his most Catholic Majesty the King of France. He has correspondence with certain persons at the French Court. I can set this down freely now that I write in a cipher.

—1670

I have been busy all day with the king. I do find that the scapular that I wear rides up on to my left shoulder as I write and is very teasing. I have heard that there are some of a less harsh cloth that may be worn. Madge and I still recite the "Little Office of Our Lady" together when we have time, but lately, I have done much controverting with heretics out abroad.

—1670

I have written much to-day. I have hit on a great idea of calling the Plot our "Trade" in my letters to William Throckmorton, who is in Paris, and the folk engaged in it the "Traders." I have worn my scapular to-day over my silken shirt.

I was sharp with Madge at supper over the potted fowl which was as done to rags. It is the very first time that I

have been so with her and it has made me unhappy since. I have never been so out of conceit with myself. My poor Madge!

—1670

Last night I did belabour myself with the knotted end of my cord for having spoken harshly to my dear Madge. H.M. was short with me to-day for many blunders I have made, and his conversion seems no nearer.

—1670

I have heard to-day that the King is entering upon a secret Treaty with France. It was drawn up at the end of last year, just before the death of the King's sister who, they say, was the chief agent in bringing it about. The Treaty is said to contain an agreement with the King of France whereby our King undertakes to join the Catholic Church and to establish the Catholic religion in England. This is great news indeed. It looks as though our prayers were already answered. I have written the news to Gravelines. I came by it privily but it is no secret of honour, moreover the Mother heard all about it from the Duchess of Orléans a short time before her death. She was a great friend to us and to the nuns at Gravelines.

—1670

The Mother's answer has disappointed me. "I like not your Treaty," she writes. "I mistrust the motives of the French King, and I would rather that Charles found his faith in a case with less temporal advantage attached to it. This Treaty will bring but little credit on the king. I pray that he will not go through with it."

—1670

By the secret Treaty the King is to receive a sum of £150,000 from the King of France. H.M., I hear, has gone so far as to consult Father Simeon if it be possible to belong to the Church privily, outwardly attending the services of the Establishment. The Father has told him that no Pope could grant such a dispensation, and the King is now disposed to openly confess himself a Catholic since there be no other way out of it. It does seem that the Plot has succeeded and England is to return to her

heritage. Madge and I are nearly beside ourselves. We see visions of the Mother back at Wildwood with no more imposts and persecution. Oh, the glory of the thought of it all! Our answer has in sooth come quickly.

—1670

The king has this day addressed me concerning the Treaty.

"What think you of my conversion, Ned?" he asked me. "How many *Aves* have you said in thanksgiving?" I did not like his manner of saying it. It told me that there was yet something wrong with His Majesty. I scarce knew how to answer. I have been waiting for this so long that now when it came, this broaching of the fateful subject, I fell into confusion. H.M. perceived it, and being in that mood, he began to press me as to what I had vowed to Heaven against his conversion. I could only tell him the truth—that I had vowed naught, save only that I had prayed Almighty God that at the time He gave H.M. the grace to confess the Faith that He would give me, if need be, the like grace to suffer something for His glory, since 'tis but fair if one prays that another be put to a test that one should be willing that a like test came to oneself. I was wholly out of countenance when I made this confession.

"How do you know that it be grace and not political expediency that moves me to take this step?" the king asked.

"Because I know that Your Majesty is no hypocrite," I made retort, and after this he discussed the Treaty no more. Madge and I have spent the evening praying that things go well with the Treaty and with the King. We have made a Novena to St Ignatius. We are full of hope.

—1670

"The King sent for me again to-day. I knew there would be news about the Treaty for he has been closeted with his counsellors. I thought for a while that he was not going to give me his confidence, but suddenly he says, "Ned, the Treaty with Louis is not to be achieved.

I cannot accept all the terms." "Your Majesty reserves the right to make war?" I queried quickly, for the clause concerning the latter was considered a shameful one for a monarch to accede to. "No," he said, "I have refused to join the Church of Rome." He looked at me shrewdly. "You were right, Ned," he said. "After all, I am not a hypocrite. I had begun to think I was, but ods fish! I did myself an injustice! and I might have gone on doing it but for you. No, no, Ned, I don't believe your religion, but I will not insult it. I can let your priests hang, but I can't profane your Sacrament!" He stopped and waited for my answer. My heart had stood still. The Plot had failed! This was the answer. The King refused to act the hypocrite!

In sooth it was not the answer we had expected, and yet—

(Mr. Coleman's secret characters are here undecipherable.)

"You will have the consolation," the King said, "of being spared having to make your votive offering for my conversion." "I may have to make it first," I dared to make answer. "Am I not Your Majesty's whipping-boy? Our religion has a place for whipping-boys among its mysteries." I don't know what impelled me to say this.

"Has it a place for Court fools?" His Majesty asked. "Ned, you are the veriest fool that ever a king kept about him. Have you realised how I am placed in straits by indulging in this untoward luxury of a conscience? Beshrew me if I may not have to ask Mr. Blood to assist me again! Mr. Blood did his best last time I was in straits, but he contrived to get caught and I was put to the inconvenience of pardoning him, and the expense of a pension for the man who stole the Crown jewels."

I had often heard it hinted that the King had a reason for pardoning the ruffian who had made an attempt on the Regalia. It shot through my mind now—was it the £30,000 foregone for the sake of Mistress Tyrwhit that His Majesty had sought to raise with the assistance of this other whipping-boy? Certain it was he got the money, for the

deed was signed and His Majesty could not have broken his written pledge. Did ever a man serve so strange a master?

—1670

Rose goes as merrily as ever, albeit in the cloister. Her last letter is characteristic. "I rejoice," she writes, "in the answer to our Novena for His Majesty's conversion. The King has shown himself a true man in refusing to accede to King Louis's terms. It is a mighty grace that he feared to profane a Holy Thing. God will reward him for it one day. No, Ned, you drive logic to death when you say that if he conceived it to be holy he must needs have believed in it. The mind of man is too subtle for logical tests. I am more than content with my King who is no hypocrite."

Nevertheless it has been a bitter disappointment to Madge and myself. She is frankly annoyed with St Ignatius.

—1670

The Plot Magnificent grows apace. All the English religious in France and the Low Countries are praying for the King's conversion, and their pupils likewise. The latter bring the practice back with them to their homes in England, and the country may now be said to be permeated with it. Protestantism should not be able to hold out against our plotting. *Laus Deo!*

Margaret has ceased to be a Lady-in-waiting to Her Majesty the Queen, which pleaseth me well for I am very fain to have her with me always and at all times.

Deo gratias! To-day a daughter has been born to me and we have baptised her by the name of Clare. All goes well with Madge. She has Phyllis with her. John Mitton has been in to see my daughter. He lodges in these days near Aldermanbury and likes well his business in the warehouse of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey. The timber trade suits him. John has done well for himself. We see much of him since Phyllis returned from Gravelines and came to be with Madge. The Mother feels it bitterly that she may not be with her child. She feels her exile more every day, Rose writes, and were it not that the rheumatick

pains that have overtaken her have enfeebled her movement, she would be returning to England privily, like the priests, and once more defying the magistrates. She asks ever about Wildwood, but we have not the heart to go there, though the place has been handed over to Margaret. We have proposed that John and Phyllis live there when they are married since John could follow his trade of timber merchant in the vicinity.

Robert has written me to-day a long letter. He is anxious that I use my influence to get a place as page in some Christian household for my eldest nephew. I have written to offer to undertake the charges of the education of Dick, the younger who was ever my favourite. If it can be done I will try and get him to St Omer's, but Robert's prejudices will be hard to overcome.

—1671

It is now known publicly that the Duke of York has been received into the Church. *Laus Deo!* The King may now follow his example. He has a great affection for his brother. If H.R.H. but live a life consistent with his religious profession. Everything turns on that. If H.R.H. gives up his irregular living the King will respect him and his religion, if not—?

My new velvetreen suit is a great success. We have given a great dinner to-day to several members of Parliament. This morning I did mislay my scapular so for the first time I go without the little habit. I have had a Conference with several heretics and bettered them in argument. They retired mighty angered against me and my Church.

The Mother has written. "My complaint has laid hold of me so that I can no longer move about. Lying still and watching others is very tiring work. How fat the Sussex magistrates must be getting for want of exercise." The Mother has not lost her old fighting spirit. Rose writes, "Tell it not in Gath, but we poor Clares *danced* for joy when we heard the news of the Duke's conversion.

Our holy Mother did not set it in the rule that the Poor Ladies should not dance on becoming occasions.

—1671

We have had great festivities to-day. Phyllis has been married to John Mitton in the Queen's Chapel. They go to Wildwood for a moon of honey.

—1671

This has been a momentous day. H.M. has informed me that I am henceforth to be Secretary to the Duke of York. The news fairly took my breath away. "It will gain you many enemies, Ned," he said. "Little Pepys would give his long ears for the post. He has been counting on it, and he is twenty years your senior."

"But am I, then, to leave your Majesty's service?" I asked, aghast.

"Since when have you become thick-headed, Ned?" the King enquired. "Have I not told you that when convenient I would find a title for my Whipping-boy. Your position with the Duke will be no *sine cure*, but it will in no way interfere with our past arrangement."

"Am I, then, to serve two masters?" I asked. "If so, to which am I to give fealty?"

"Have no fear," the King said—he always approves candour. "The Duke and I have like interests, and think alike politically, save that James plays the fool in trying to attain his ends and I never do, so if you would serve the Duke faithfully, serve me well. I always act in James' interest," the King went on, "but he is pig-headed and I would sooner deal with his Secretary. I could not afford Pepys, he is like all the others, he has his price." I knew that the King was trusting me—that he was taking me into his confidence. I could not refuse the new office. It would be the first overt office that I had held—hitherto I have been Sir Thomas Clifford's clerk to the world—yet somehow it hath not greatly elated me. The Duke and I have no sympathy of disposition. I know His Royal Highness thinks me flighty and unstable. I would rather

nave His Majesty's little finger than the whole of the Duke of York, albeit that he is a mighty brave man and an honest one.

CHAPTER II

—1671

IT is as I thought. People are asking, "who is this Coleman? Some upstart who has insinuated himself into the royal favour, and a Papist to boot!" I had fain gone on living quietly in the old way, but the King has waxed angered at our continued simple mode of living. "For Heaven's sake," he says, "when I do pay a man his pension, and that a handsome one, let him not libel me by living as though he lacked for money!" True it is that my pension gets paid regularly, which is more than most can say. The gentlemen-at-arms are in sore straits, they say, having received nothing from the royal coffers these many months.

It is commonly said that those who inform against Papists are the surest of getting their wage. We must needs make haste to convert England, for much persecution still goes on in the matter of fines and imprisonment.

—1671

We have decided to keep a coach. The King will have it that the Duke's secretary must be a person of importance. Sir Thomas Clifford has congratulated me on my new appointment. He has given me excellent advice that I keep my hands clean, for now, he warns me, there will be many anxious to buy my interest, and their manner of giving is such that one may receive the pension almost unawares. He has openly embraced the Catholic faith
Laus Deo!

—1671

My coach has given grave offence. They are asking more than ever, "Who is this Jack-in-office Coleman Alack! I have many enemies.

—1671

I had a free day to-day. Bought a new periwig in the morning, and had a game of hide-and-seek with little Clare in the afternoon. Said the Little Office of Our Lady with Madge in the evening.

—1671

I have taken counsel of my confessor as to the sumptuous repasts that I am now invited to. It ill becomes a guest to refuse dishes, yet such luxurious living gives me scruples. "Is there any dish that your palate turns from?" he asked, and I named oysters. "Then take oysters," he says—"as many as need be according to necessity."

Mr. Evelyn did invite me to-day to eat oysters at his lodgings. I have partaken of a dozen. Madge has doctored me with "Jesuit powder."

—1671

Will Throckmorton writes from Paris that this Coleman is described in a news-letter as a man who enjoys good living. His pious observance of religion does not prevent him from enjoying oysters! "You are getting famous, dear Ned," he observes, but I am vexed lest I have given scandal. Life grows perplexing, and oysters, moreover, sorely afflict my stomach.

I have made five converts this month. *Laus Deo!*

—1671

I have not worn my scapular this two days having lain it aside for Madge to wash, which thing she always does for me.

—1672

To-day I did a prodigious foolish thing. I inadvertently handed H.M. a copy of a letter of mine to Gravelines among some other papers. It was a brief outline that I had sketched of some of the political changes that would have to be engineered to make the establishment of the

Catholic faith possible in England, and an estimate of the sum of money required if Cromwell's Parliament is to be paid off. I was covered with confusion when I saw what the King was reading, but he appeared mighty interested, and far from ill-pleased. "This is uncommon well put, Ned," he said. "But why not to the King of France? 'Tis a scheme that would appeal to His Most Christian Majesty?"

I thought the King was jesting so I replied that I had not the honour of the acquaintance of the King of France. "No matter," the King said. "He will think that Edward Coleman is another name for Charles Stuart." He stopped, as though a thought had occurred to him, and gave himself to think—there are those among his counsellors who imagine that H.M. cannot think!—"Why not write this to the King's Confessor?" he said—he was fingering the paper, thoughtfully. "'Tis a matter that touches Louis's religious zeal—his confessor would be the man to work on."

"But," I persisted, for I saw that the King meant it, "King Louis' confessor would take no notice of an obscure fellow called Coleman, however fair his schemes sounded."

"Write and see what happens," the King replied. "Your Plot appeals to me, Ned. I make no promise to become a Papist—unless those dear ladies at Gravelines and Paris pray me in, willy-nilly—but, frankly, I would rather have England Catholic than aught else for Catholics are my best servants. You can write to the confessor with the proper spiritual fervour—enough for both of us, and I assure you, I wish this 'pestilent heresy' out of England with all my heart. You must be my *alter ego*, Ned! Edward Coleman and Charles Stuart must share a personality over this affair."

I sometimes wish that I could distinguish when H.M. is jesting and when he is in earnest. He insists, however, on my writing to the French King's confessor and sending a draft of the scheme that could free England from the Protestant thrall, and suggesting that he should obtain the

money for the purpose from the King of France. It has been an over-whelming development in the Plot, and all the outcome of what Madge would call one of my Juniper tricks — the handing of the wrong paper to H.M.!

The girl has cast away my scapular in the great cleaning of our house. I have said nothing to Madge. Some day I will ask her to make another.

—1673

The little Duchess of York has arrived in England. We hope great things for the Plot through her coming. She is a most devout Catholic, and a mighty dainty little lady to boot. She was only persuaded to relinquish the idea of entering religion by this noble undertaking of attempting the conversion of England through her marriage with the Duke of York whom she had never so much as seen. The Duke is already prodigious in love with his wife, and so, likewise, is everyone. She looks so young and artless that it is difficult to credit her with so purposeful a soul. Hers must verily be a gallant heart for England is a strange and cold country for a Southerner. I fear me she will be a very lonely little lady.

I have had the information to-day that I am henceforth to be known as Secretary to the Duchess of York. H.M. has announced my new title to me characteristically. "Your wife need not be jealous, Ned, the little duchess will not trouble you much."

I am now counted fully a member of the Duke's family. I do much correspondence for the Duchess, whose zeal for religion is tremendous. She has the establishing of new convents greatly at heart. The Duke is much away. I see little of him. I think I perplex him—he is not a man with whom one can be whimsical, and at times he mistrusts my levity of manner. He is the antitype of his brother, and yet there is a sincere affection between the two, and the King respects his brother I feel sure, for what he has suffered for his religion's sake, and also he has taken notice that the Duke has made an effort to give up his liaisons since his marriage. I think I have been

hard in my judgments on the Duke in the past, for which God forgive me, but his lack of tact does land him in many a scrape from which he turns to the King to extricate him. Many a time have the king's wits saved the Duke from the consequences of his actions. I have known H.M. to write a letter in the Duke's name and so disentangle him from a situation that would have brought trouble on his Royal Highness, all unbeknown to the latter. It is a vile slander on the part of those who would make out that the King and his brother are not friends. My position in the Duke's household gives me free access to His Majesty, who still transacts his business with me in the Laboratory, unbeknown to his household—even the Lady Castlemaine suspects not who is the King's Secretary.

I have received an answer to my last letter from the French King's new Confessor. Its tone has fairly amazed me. He appears to entertain my proposals, and evidently regards me as a personage of the utmost importance. I cannot imagine how he has come by the idea. He might, indeed be writing to the King himself; with so much power does he appear to credit this unknown Edward Coleman! I have shown his letter to the King and he is well satisfied. He has given me some points to incorporate in another letter which I shall now proceed to write at his request. It is a mighty move towards the fulfilment of the Plot Magnificent.

—1673

We continue our correspondence. The King bids me keep up this idea of my importance that the French father has conceived. "Write as though you were the king himself," he says. "Mr. Coleman is a person of consequence at the French Court, and you have me behind you right enough. H.M. loves this joke. It is quite to his liking. I confess I like it less. "I will be a Catholic by proxy," the King says, "through you, Ned—it will save me from being a hypocrite." It makes one fairly dazed to traverse the byways of the King's mind.

No wonder he is an enigma to his brother the Duke, who has the most painfully straight way of thinking that I have ever known. I sometimes feel as though I were playing hide-and-seek with the King's real self up those twistings and turnings—and then I mind me of the day when we first met in my Lady Castlemaine's goblin garden.

—1673

We have a great piece of news to-day that Father Ireland has been made Procurator of the Society of Jesus and is to come to London.

—1673

My friend Sir Edmund Godfrey dined with us to-day. He tells me that they are saying that Mr. Coleman is very busy. Though not a Catholic he is a true friend and wishes me well. He comes often in the evening to see Madge and play with our baby girl.

—1673

H.M.'s habit of dictating the contents of a letter to me and bidding me sign it with my name is becoming disquieting to my conscience. This day he has led me into a pass that now begins to trouble me.

"Can you write like the Duke?" he asked me, suddenly.

"H.R.H. has instructed me to make my hand-writing sufficiently like his that he might dictate a letter, if need be, as written with his own hand," I replied.

"Well then," the King said, "write now a letter in the Duke's hand-writing to — and sign his name. It must needs bear a royal name and there is too much risk in putting mine."

"The Duke has agreed to this?" I asked. The King looked at me sharply.

"I have told you that the Duke and I are in perfect agreement in politics," he answered. "I have the Duke's permission to act in such matters. I suppose I have yours?"

He said this sneeringly. H.M. was out of conceit with himself.

I wrote the letter, but it has troubled me much since.

Howbeit, if it falls into the wrong hands I can swear that it was written by me without the Duke's knowledge and none will suspect the King.

CHAPTER III

—1673

THE King has raised my pension again. Many members of parliament consort at my house, and I have obtained a fair insight into their ways of thinking and acting. If we had but the pecuniary means we could obtain the good will of many for a dissolution of this iniquitous Parliament which is the enemy of H.M. and the creature of corrupt ministers. The King of France has not yet been prevailed upon to advance this money, but a certain sum has passed through my hands to such parliament men who are not above taking a pension, and such that are are few. If this Parliament but once be dissolved the cruel disabilities under which the Catholicks lie can be removed and then the conversion of our country will be in sight.

—1673

Sister Rose (so-called after her name-sake of Lima) has written to-day. She also is finding Mr. Coleman "too busy!" "We are praying for the King," she writes. "Do not clip the wings of our prayer, Ned, with the sharpness of your wits. I confess that I mistrust these political schemes and intrigues. Dear Ned, I would have the means used to bring about this holy end as fair as the gold and silver that we use for the Altar vessels. I like not this traffic with the unworthy motives of dishonest men, it can bring no blessing on our Cause."

—1673

I am now immersed in foreign correspondence and much of my time is taken up in holding conferences with

heretics. Dr. Stillingfleet and Dr. Burnet have conferred with me and retired in confusion. They are greatly angered at my winning Lady Tyrwhit, the Mother's kinswoman by marriage, to the true Faith. Madge complains that I seldom have time to say the Little Office with her, and in sooth I have more useful matters in hand. My new pantaloons are passing shapely, fitting close about the waist. I find that a slight cord no thicker than a string suffices for the little habit of St. Francis, so I have discarded the stout cord which sorely incommoded the set of my new-suit.

—1673

I have now a clerk in my household named Jerome Boatman, and my nephew Dick has come to be educated at my charges. I hope to send him to St. Omer's. Robert has scruples, but Elizabeth is eager enough for her son's worldly advancement to overrule these. Little Clare grows more winsome each day. We grieve that the Mother cannot see her. One day we hope to take her to Gravelines. The Mother's infirmity has now completely disabled her. The surgeons can do naught for it.

"But for my legs," she writes, "I would have been in England long since disguised as a gipsy and teaching the little ones their prayers. The good God has laid me by the heels these five years but I have not yet lost the desire to flout a magistrate." Still there is something in the Mother's letters that makes me feel that she has acquired something in these long still years of inactivity. I cannot say what it is. Rose notices the same.

"The Mother," she writes, "was always tender and lenient with bad folk, but now her charity seems to extend even to the self-made littleness of rather good ones! She is merciful even to people who have misused their opportunities! Her chamber grows more and more like a sanctuary."

—1673

My friend Dick Langhorne came into supper. He is a good Catholic and zealous for the Plot. He warns me that caution is necessary. Parliament is waxing infuriated

against the Catholicks on account of recent disclosures of certain negotiations with France. Dick is a staunch Catholick, though little given to controversy. He has it that a bitter argument does more harm than good, even though one get the best of it. "'Tis not likely that a man who is cut will go over and embrace the one who wounds him," he says, "nor his creed either!"

"Nevertheless," I said, "when the chirurgeons cut a man to relieve him of his infirmity they use a sharp implement and fear not to cause him momentary pain."

"Truly," he answered, "your simile is good, but the instrument must itself be purified. I have had a chirurgeon tell me how it will some day be discovered by all that the corrupting that often follows the cutting of a man's body is caused not by the nature of the infirmity, nor the cutting itself, but by the knife not being spotlessly clean. In the future, he says, when men have learnt more about surgery, it will be the cleanliness of the instrument that will be the chirurgeon's first care. If we are to cut men for heresy, Ned, we must be sure that our knife is clean of uncharity as well as our hand deft and gentle."

"Ah, well, Dick," I replied, "if you are right, I must confess that I lacerated Dr. Ezrael Tonge with a rusty scalpel to-day, and corruption will most assuredly have set in." I ever enjoy a spar with Dick Langhorne. He laughed heartily at this, and we ended the evening merrily with venison done in a new way.

Sister Rose writes in answer to my letter wherein I did point out that whereas the altar vessels should be of gold and silver, yet in times of stress the Chalice may be of base metal and suffice.

"No, no, Ned," she saith, "your answer won't do. Base metal is but humble metal, and God hath no quarrel with humility. Such things as men scorn He scorns not. A crude picture will suffice for the peasant, a crude, simple story for the ignorant mind, as means wherewith to teach heavenly things, but the arts and subtleties of politics, these are base in another sense, and methinks unworthy, but we shall see how they prosper the salvation of the King's

soul." I must yet have the last word with Rose, but it do take some thinking.

—1673

We have moved to our new house near Westminster Abbey. Here we have furnished one chamber as an oratory where we can have Mass said. This has pleased us both mightily. My tailor has sent me his bill. He is the father of Mr. Samuel Pepys and he charges prodigious, but the cut of my clothes is now unimpeachable.

—1673

The Commons have brought in a Test Bill whereby no Catholick may hold office under the Crown.

—1673

My Lord Clifford has resigned his office of Lord High Treasurer rather than take the test. *Laus Deo!* But who shall tell what this has cost a man of his ambition and temper. He has retired to his house at Tunbridge Wells. He was very melancholy when I said good-bye to him. The Mother will grieve over this news for she thinks highly of my late master. The news that this iniquitous Test has become law will be ill received at Gravelines for God knows the Catholicks in England have enough of disabilities. We must work the harder to be rid of this Parliament of rogues and bigots.

—1675

This day the King hath bade me give over my correspondency with the Père la Chaise. "I'm sorry for your cause, Ned," quoth he, "but Louis's religion is not his tenderest point. I can reach him by a shorter cut than the woes of English Catholics." I know not what is in his majesty's mind.

—1675

The King this day hath prorogued Parliament. There will be no Dissolution now. They say that the King is receiving a pension from France so that he goes not to war save when King Louis will be in agreement. He hath not spoken to me of this.

—1675

I see little of the King. He lives much at Windsor and

seems to care naught for affairs. No one knows when Parliament will meet again. Catholics are more oppressed than ever. A rogue called Luzancy has started a libel on us that men have taken hold of. The Green Ribbon Club have him at their charges.

—1675

There is great hope that the appeal to the King of France will prove successful. For a sum of £20,000 success might be ensured, and the Duke restored to the command of the Fleet, and an Army got in readiness to protect the King's interests. This would spell the greatest blow to Protestantism that it has received since its birth. We have a mighty work here on our hands, no less than the conversion of three kingdoms, and by that perhaps the subduing of a pestilent heresy, which has domineered over this part of the northern world a long time; there was never such hope of success since the death of Queen Mary. I have stated this in a letter to the Père de la Chaise. What the King has in his mind I do not exactly know. It is strange that he should be the arch-plotter in our Conspiracy! And to think that a word from him could accomplish the main object of our efforts without all this manœuvring.

—1675

The House of Commons is at more strife than ever on the question of a dissolution. With a few more votes we might work our end and rid the country of this dishonest Parliament. The re-election of a Parliament of honest men might gain religious liberty for Catholics along with dissenters. If we had but the French king's money we might accomplish this.

—1676

To-day we have bought fresh furniture for our oratory, but I have so much business on hand that we do but seldom use it. The Bishop of London has brought a complaint against me that I have converted certain persons to the Catholick faith. (They count among these poor Will Throckmorton who did run wild in Paris for a time but is now so fervent for the faith that we have made him

our agent for the Plot.) He demands that I be dismissed from the Duke's service. It is all passing whimsical. I have been "dismissed" and Margaret and I go to Brussels for a spell; I, on the King's business. From whence we hope to go to Gravelines and show the Mother our little Clare. It was H.M. who pointed out to me that the distance was not great.

—1676—Gravelines.

We have seen the Mother! After these years, during which she has lain on her back inactive with this rheumatick sickness which cannot be cured. She is the same as ever, and most beautiful to look upon, albeit that her face is marked with deep lines of suffering. She is delighted with little Clare, who sits on her couch, image-like, watching the birds as they eat the crumbs off her coverlet. She lies thus in the garden all day. We have had a great tale to tell her of the progress of the Plot and the business in which I am immersed.

The sad death of my Lord Clifford was a grievous shock to her, especially on account of the vile report that he had died by his own hand.

She is also full of indignation at the perfidy of the people who no longer make an idol of H.R.H. the Duke because he has professed the Catholick faith, but rather are ready to believe any calumny of him, forgetting his gallant service to the Country. She has a high opinion of the Duke. I told her all that was permissible of our negotiations with France. She listened, and then she said, suddenly, after a silence, in her direct way of speaking. "Ned, I like not your politics, and I doubt if good will come of them. Don't interfere with God more than you can help. Men are such busybodies, and we are in such a hurry. Sometimes His Majesty has to lay us on our backs to get us out of the way. I've learnt many things lying here, Ned. Things I couldn't have learnt while I was up and doing. *Vacate, et videte quoniam ego sum Deus!* I'm thankful now that I was not allowed to die six years ago, although it would have been for the Faith." I looked at the suffering, beautiful face, and I felt it in me

that the Mother will carry something into Eternity that a swift martyrdom could not have given her. She seemed to read my thoughts.

"Ned," she said, "I think martyrdom has to be earned. You will find that a martyr's death is almost always the reward of a noble life—a life of preparation. Look where you will, it is so. Simple physical courage doesn't win a man a martyr's crown unless he has the requisite virtues to enable him to bear his palm becomingly. God will make a saint of you, Ned, before he allows you to become a martyr." She smiled the old smile. "Where did you get your periwig?" she asked, "at the King's barber's?" That was so like her! Then she finished, "Don't be too fussy, Ned, or you will get under God Almighty's feet and trip Him up."

—1676

We are returned from Brussels and I am still Secretary to the Duchess of York!

The vile fables told by the man Luzancy, who swears that the Duchess's preacher, Father St. Germaine has been making converts at the point of the dagger, have been like to get me into trouble. He has mentioned my name along with others. The Père St. Germaine has been banished the kingdom and Luzancy's lies have gained him the vicarage of Dovercourt. He calls himself an ex-priest, and is the bastard son of a French opera-dancer.

One Père de la Colombière hath been sent as Preacher to the Duchess in the place of Father St. Germaine (who is now in Paris assisting us.)

I can almost forgive the vile Luzancy his evil work in that it hath been the occasion of the Père de la Colombière's coming to England.

He is indeed a strange and wonderful man. His preaching hath little of controversy but he wins converts by the sheer beauty of his message and also of his personality. Unlike others of his order, for he is a Jesuit, he leads a hermit life, seldom going abroad. His message is rather to Catholics than to heretics, save those who have enough of spirituality to follow it. A strange story

is told concerning its origin. A nun at Paray-le-Moniel, at the Convent of the Visitation where he was director, received, it is said, strange revelations from our Lord Himself who appeared to her and showed her His very Heart, making her to realize the love, like to our human love, that He entertains for men. It is no new doctrine, but, as preached by this father, it has all the freshness of a new discovery. Crowds flock to hear him preach on love—nothing else but love. It is curiously foreign to the temper of this age of bitterness and hard-hitting. The marvel is the greater that his message should be so eagerly received. He has brought it straight from this little country convent to the chapel at St James, and preaches it in a foreign tongue which he has but half mastered, but always with the same result. It has something of the sweetness of the message of old Brother Giles.

It gives me the feeling, as I hear him, that some wonderful new thing has come into our midst. But it is idle to try and set it down, this feeling. I know not, even, if it be joy or discomfiture!

—1676

I am seeking spiritual advice from the Père de la Colombière.

Sad news to-day. Poor Will Throckmorton, with whom I am corresponding writes that he has been grievously hurt in a duel.

—1676

We have to-day advice of poor Will's death from his wound. He has been zealous for the faith these two years in Paris, albeit that he remained gay and a lover of good living to the end. Rose will see that he rests well. God bless his dear soul. This is a great grief to me. Father St Germaine will now be our agent to keep us acquainted with affairs in France, but His Majesty's interest in the French scheme hath died out. He seldom sends for me now. My correspondence hath mainly to do with the establishing of convents in Antwerp and other places. The Duchess writes continually on this subject to the

Vatican, and to her brother the Duke of Modena, and others in high places.

I have resolved to tell the Duke about the letter I wrote in his name some years back. I have kept a copy in cipher, along with others, of the correspondence instigated by H.M. Of course I shall say nothing about the dictation of the letter by H.M., but I feel that the Duke ought to be told. It is difficult, for he is not a man to make allowances for such an action. . . .

I have shown the letter to the Duke. He got into a great fury. "Look for no help from me," he said, "if your arrogant folly gets you into trouble, as it most certainly will do." He said many other things, too, that made me feel that I was in sooth H.M.'s whipping-boy."

April 1678

The Society of Jesus is holding a Consult in London at the residence of the Duke of York. A rash action on the part of the Duke. If it got known trouble might come out of it. The penal laws are being severely enacted against Catholicks. Priests have received notice to quit the Kingdom, and even the Duchess of York herself is not allowed to retain her Catholick servants in her household. The Green Ribbon Club is ever on the alert and assiduously poisons the public mind against His Majesty's Catholick subjects, circulating the most vile libels.

June 1678

My nephew Dick writes from St Omer's that a "sly, stinking rogue named Oates" has been suddenly dismissed from the College. "Wee all hated him," he writes, "hee was a toad. Hee made the fathers beleeve in him but we boys knew him for a slimy weevil." Dick has a graphic pen (albeit that he spells as the spirit moveth him) and a vocabulary that makes me feel that I have robbed the anti-popery party of a potential orator!"

July 1678

Dick has returned from St Omer's and is acting as page to the Père de la Colombière.

—1678

The king has said a strange thing to me to-day that I

must needs record. "Ned," he says. "You are to be sure and be near to me when I am dying (he has been taken with sickness lately and no doubt it gives him to serious thoughts), and, if I make certain signs be sure that you send for Huddleston. He saved my life once, he may save my soul yet." "But, Your Majesty," I ventured to say, "why wait till you are dying?" He regarded me impatiently. I feared I had said too much, but he went on without offence. "Because, if there is anything in your religion, what you call faith may come to me at the end—there will always be the possibility that your prayers may not go unanswered—an off-chance—and I want to provide against it. That is the sum of my faith at present—I admit the possibility that these praying-women may achieve something—and if they do, well, I am willing to do my part. Be there, Ned, and send for Huddleston if, if anything happens. If anything doesn't happen, still send for Huddleston!"

"I will be there," I promised, "unless, of course, I die first," I added.

H.M. smiled at me. "That will be better still," said he, "for then you will manage it for me in Heaven."

It is the first time I have seen the King in this mood. I could vow that there were tears in his eyes. "Ned," he said, "I have treated you monstrous badly. As a Christian you must pray for me before any, for I am your worst enemy."

CHAPTER IV

THE Reverend Dr. Tonge, rector of St. Michael's, Wood St., in the City of London, sat in his library meditating on his discourse for the morrow. The worthy man was not troubled with any difficulty as to a choice of subject inasmuch as his invariable theme was the Papal Abomination. Popery in all its hideous aspects—with all its harrowing possibilities—was Dr. Tonge's unvarying subject. He was a timid and imaginative little man, and he attributed all evil things to Popery. The human boy, who by nature abhors a sermon, found solace, if not joy, in the thrilling imaginings of the rev. preacher at Wood Street when he enumerated the vile propensities of the Jesuit, or execrated the "horrid doings" of the Pope's minions. In later times the rev. doctor might have come under the aspersion of being a neurotic subject, but in the year 1678 sober citizens were duly impressed by his discourses, and harrowed as effectively, if not as exquisitely, as their small sons by the preacher's eloquence.

The rector had finished his supper, not perhaps without a qualm of anxiety lest his new cook might prove to be a disguised Papist, and the food to have contained poison. He had, moreover, ascertained that the noise behind the heavy curtains proceeded from a rat in the wainscot and not a concealed member of the Catholic Church, when the servant opened the door and announced, "Mr. Titus Oates." Little Dr. Tonge went very white at the sound of the name. Titus, he remembered, had been last heard of, after a disreputable career in the ministry of the Established Church, as having gone over to the Jesuits

and entered their college at St Omer's. It was an awkward position for anyone so highly-strung as the rector of St. Michael's. The convert might be armed and attempt to treat Dr. Tonge as the infamous Father St. Germaine had treated the apostate from his communion, and hold a dagger to his breast until he had embraced the errors of Rome.

He would have sent back word, refusing to see Titus only the latter had followed close on the servant's heels and was already in the room. Lest the reader should chance not to be familiar with the delightful sketch of Dr. Titus Oates standing in the pillory, which is to be found in many books dealing with the period, we will endeavour to give a description of his appearance, taken mainly from a contemporary source. He was an individual with a full yellow face, shaped like a bladder, with small sunken eyes, and a mouth which bisected the face above a long, flat chin. He was a preternaturally solemn person, so far as his face could be said to possess any expression, resembling, as it did, more a very bad drawing of the human countenance than the human countenance itself.

"Ezrael," Titus said, "Is it possible that you have forgotten me?" for his host had receded visibly from the outstretched hand. He was a disreputable enough figure for any man to shirk contact with; his clothes in tatters, and his person unkempt.

The little rector pulled himself together with an effort. Titus appeared to be unarmed.

"I have heard," he replied, sturdily enough, "that you have joined the ranks of anti-Christ. I was grievously put about. They told me that you had joined the Jesuits at St Omer's."

The visitor waited until a tear had introduced itself into his already watery eye. "And you believed it!" he sighed. "Ah, well! the will of Heaven be done. I was prepared to be misjudged when for the glory of the Protestant religion I saw fit to fain that I had embraced Popery."

He coaxed another tear into the other eye, and then he

exclaimed, with real dramatic effect. "I have indeed been among the Jesuits as one of themselves. I have indeed embraced Popery to the outward eye!—and thus I have wormed out their utmost secrets!" Mr. Oates was a fine orator with a magnificent drawl. The rector fixed his fascinated eyes on the large yellow face. He was marvelling that the other should be there to tell the tale.

"So well have I played my part," Titus went on triumphantly, "that ever since I returned to London I have subsisted on the alms of Jesuits who yet were willing to believe me one of themselves."

"Forgive me, Titus," the rector gasped. "But indeed I had feared that they had got you round with their smoo h reasoning and that you were truly and sincerely attached to their hellish cause."

"I forgive you," Mr. Oates replied piously—and he quoted some scripture *re* forgiveness which it might appear profane to repeat. He blinked away the obedient tears and snivelled gently. "I was prepared to be misunderstood, even by my own friends," he murmured. "All this I was prepared to suffer for the over-throwing of anti-Christ." He sniffed again. "I have been in sore straits since I forswore their errors," he went on. "I mean, since they found out my motives the Jesuits have withdrawn their aid. I am suffering hunger and thirst for righteousness sake, Ezzy." Mr. Oates glanced hungrily round the room—"To-morrow I must seek His Majesty for (he lowered his voice to a sepulchral whisper) I have information of a most hellish nature." (There were times when Mr. Oates spoke the truth from inadvertence.)

"Sit down, friend Oates," Ezrael said, "I would fain hear more of this. Is it, is it a plot?" He drew a breath and his eyes stood wide open.

"Yea, verily," Titus answered in deep tones, "it is a plot. Friend Tonge, I am taken with faintness. Have you strong waters that will serve as medicine?"

Ezrael made all haste to produce the strong waters. Mr. Oates's faint took considerable doctoring, and the

little rector was flustered enough to require a nip of the same remedy.

When Mr. Titus Oates had emptied his tankard, he leant back in his chair. "'Tis a horrid plot," he breathed, and rolled his eyes round the room. "A damnable abomination of a plot. A very hell of a plot!"

The rector's flesh crawled.

"Who's at the bottom of it?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"All the Jesuits," Oates replied, with a comprehensive wave of his hand, "and scores of hired ruffians, and all the Catholic gentry."

"My stars!" Dr. Tonge exclaimed, and stretched a trembling hand out for the bottle. "Is Coleman in it?" he queried.

"Who's Coleman?" Mr. Oates enquired, with hasty interest.

"Why, the Duke's secretary!" Tonge said. "Fancy you not knowing Coleman! He's at the bottom of all the intrigues in Parliament, a most dangerous Papist and perverter."

"Yes," Mr. Oates said, slowly and thoughtfully, "Coleman's in the plot."

When pressed for more details the visitor became mysterious to a degree that placed his listener in a frenzy of bewildered fear. He gleaned that a hideous revelation was to be made to His Majesty of a plot of peculiar atrocity. Mr. Oates gave him no names beyond that of the Jesuit, Father Ireland, and some others of his Society. On the other hand he asked the rector several questions as to the names of certain persons suspected of Popish leanings, and extracted much information which put him *en rapport* with the politics of the moment.

"I shall take my text from Daniel, to-morrow," Dr. Tonge groaned. "The abomination of desolation has certainly arrived."

"You be careful and keep your mouth shut," Oates retorted, in severe and entirely natural tones, "or it won't come off at all!—I mean, you'll play into the enemies'

hands." He had resumed the unctious drawl—"We must needs let them fall into the pit which they have digged for others." The visitor appeared to be taken again with faintness, for he had to recourse the medicine for a second time, after which he set himself to extract information from his host with renewed energy, and somewhat abated discretion. While the worthy divine meandered on, Mr. Oates took copious notes, and a third recourse to the bottle developed the artist in him to an extent that fairly bewildered his informant.

After a silence, during which he pored over his notes, Mr. Titus Oates suddenly appeared to forget the serious nature of his investigation. He closed one eye, and applying a dirty finger to his nose, remarked, with extraordinary knowingness, "I've half a mind, I've half a mind, Ez, to put this Coleman at the bottom of it instead of the Jesuit; it would be prettier work, but we shall see. We might get the Duke of York in later, I've wanted the Duke all along, only my Lord Shaftesbury won't hear of it."

He moved close up to the rector and breathed unpleasantly into his ear in a hoarse, confidential whisper—Mr. Oates had become expansive under the influence of the medicine—"I'll have the Queen in it yet! Damme if I don't get her to poison the King! What of that for a climax, friend Tonge?"

The little rector gaped at his guest. Had some occult Jesuit devilry robbed him of his reason? His own wits were a trifle blurred through keeping his guest in countenance with the bottle. Was he hearing wrong?

"Titus," he gasped, "you talk as if you were inventing it all!"

The ready tears came into Mr. Oates's eyes. "Friend Tonge," he gurgled, "I don't want to think—I don't wish to think it, but when you speak like that I am made to suspect that you are secretly with the enemy. Don't, for the sake of old days, give me anything to use against you, for" (the sniff was requisitioned here) "I have a conscience, Tonge. Don't say that you disbelieve the plot

for that would surely prove that you are in it." It was not a flawless argument, but worse logic carried force in a Court of law a few weeks later when England had lost her reason. "And be careful," he went on, "not a word of this, or they may stab you to death in some dark place. They do these things. I have reliable information, from the ruffian who is told off to kill Dr. Stillingfleet." He watched the rector shrewdly with his small, sunken eyes. There was no sense of humour in Mr. Oates's composition, so he was not tempted to relax his solemnity. The rector went perfectly green with terror. "I will be careful," he whimpered. "I fear me that I run a greivous risk."

"Not if you hold your tongue," Titus said. "Cheer up, friend Tonge, there's a good time coming." It seemed a slightly enigmatic saying. Dr. Tonge was genuinely relieved to see the last of his visitor. He bolted and barred the door after him with his own hands, and crept to bed in as lively a state of horror as can be imagined.

A few days later the Protestant champion received a second visit from Mr. Titus Oates, or Dr. Oates as he now called himself. He was in excellent spirits, and wore a new suit of black clothes of clerical cut. "All goes well," he informed his anxious host, as he let himself down into a comfortable chair in the latter's library.

"Heaven be praised," the rector answered, piously enough. "Has the plot then, come to naught?"

"Come to naught?" the visitor echoed. "Look at that!" He produced a document from his pocket, and laid it down triumphantly before Dr. Tonge.

"There's the whole thing set out complete. Read it, Ezrael."

The trembling Ezrael did so, and it took him some time, during which Dr. Oates regaled himself from a bottle which he fetched from the cupboard in free-and-easy fashion. Crossing his legs, he surveyed his host with an air of pride and satisfaction that suggested rather the creative genius of the Mermaid tavern than the horrified discloser of a foul and atrocious plot.

"My Lord Shaftesbury is mighty taken with it," Oates said.

But the horrified rector was too absorbed in the lurid compilation before him to heed the author's comments.

It was eminently calculated to raise the hair of the alarmist divine. The Plot as set forth consisted of a singularly complete and comprehensive attempt to establish Popery by means of the annihilation of its opponents *en masse*. The King's demise was to be procured in quite a number of ways. He was to be shot, stabbed and poisoned. Assassins had been provided by the Jesuit organisers, and everything was arranged to the utmost detail. The whole was set forth in forty-three articles. Dr. Oates sat, modestly sipping his wine and waiting for the compliment that an author looks for when his masterpiece is under perusal.

Dr. Tonge laid it down and gasped.

"It's 'orrible!" he said. Sheer terror had robbed him of his aspirates. "What are you going to do? My God! we shall all be slain in our beds!"

"Yes," Titus said, "and there'll be a Jesuit standing up in your pulpit giving people permission to kill a lot more unless you do what I tell you."

"What must I do?" the rector queried.

"You've got to take this paper to the King," Oates said. "Kirkby, a friend of mine who works in the King's laboratory, is going to warn him of the two ruffians who are to try and shoot him in St. James Park, and you must follow it up with this. You must come with me now to Lord Danby and substantiate it all. Dr. Tonge is better known than Dr. Oates. You might copy the articles out in Greek characters, and we'll shapen them into proper form."

They sat themselves down to the task. The literary style was susceptible to polishing; and here and there Mr. Oates introduced a fresh character, as by an inspiration.

"Let's have Wakeman, the King's physician," he cried, suddenly. "Why not, Ez.? Hey, yes! Wakeman shall

be bribed to poison the King!" He slapped his thigh in real satisfaction.

"Titus," Dr. Tonge asked, in sudden perplexity, "are you making this up?"

"It's going to wipe out Popery," Titus replied. "Ezrael, are you suggesting that Popery should not be wiped out?"

"Heaven forbid," Dr. Tonge said, with feeling, "but, Titus, I can't forget that you've been among the Jesuits."

"Swines!" Titus ejaculated, soothingly. "'Tis they who say that the end justifies the means—let 'em fall in the pit that they have digged for themselves. Why be too nice about facts, Ez., in such a cause?"

"Well," Mr. Oates observed, when they had finished their task, "I call that a mighty fine plot, a devilish fine plot, an uncommon prettily conceived plot. A hellish abomination to the life, Ez. Wycherley never got a plot to match it for any of his comedies, damme if he did!"

"It's in a good cause," Dr. Tonge said, rather less buoyantly, "and doubtless it does not come near the real abominations that the Papists are conceiving in the blackness of their hearts." He found much solace in this reflection.

Dr. Oates chuckled softly. "Now Titus will have his day," said he. "Titus will go shabby no longer, he will be the saviour of the Nation. Oh, 'tis a fine proper hellish abomination this!" He rubbed his hands together, gleefully.

"Titus," the rector said, reprovingly, "make not so merry over a thing so vile. I doubt me not that much truth lies behind it all."

"'Tis the levity that I learned with the Jesuits," Titus said, grimacing his mouth back into gravity, "they would joke by the hour over the murdering of His Majesty."

So it was that a third Popish plot came into being—the only one that has come down to history with full details. It simmered gently in the brains of Mr. Titus Oates and his confederates while Mr. Coleman was corresponding with the Vatican on matters ecclesiastical connected with

the conversion of England's ruler, and while a little company of consecrated women were praying in a foreign land for the salvation of the soul of Charles, King of England.

CHAPTER V

MRS. EDWARD COLEMAN sat in her husband's privy closet in their house in Stable Yard, Westminster, engaged in her periodical task of straightening his papers. Mr. Coleman was prodigious careless with his papers. They littered the whole place. Curious papers they were, too. Some covered with cipher characters. Others, written with wide spacing, became more interesting if you held them close to the fire, for then other lines became visible, having been written in vanishing ink. Mrs. Coleman made a point of seeing to the tidying of her husband's papers herself. It was a simple cosy little room with a wide chimney-piece and little furniture save the writing-bureau and a kind of hat-stand which stood in one corner and was, as a matter-of-fact, the receptacle for Mr. Coleman's periwig when the rather hot-headed secretary doffed that official article of attire.

A very charming lady Margaret Coleman had become. Totally unlike the court dames of the period, yet with a freshness and gaiety about her that was quite delightful enough to cause Mr. Coleman's wife to be highly approved of by his friends. Of these latter, Margaret had but a poor opinion. She frankly mistrusted most of them, and their overtures of friendship towards her husband, but Mr. Coleman's help-meet was willing enough to recognise the necessity of the social duties which she discharged so admirably. She realised that the dear old days when they had lived simply in their lodgings at Pall Mall must give place to this more formal and artificial existence, and withal, they contrived to be passing happy, she, and Ned,

and little Clare. At times things became somewhat disquieting, when, for instance, the malignant Green Ribbon Club raised some new scare anent the Papists, but they themselves managed to escape the disabilities that most of their co-religionists suffered from. They heard Mass without hindrance at the Queen's or the Duke of York's chapel, and sometimes one of the priests attached to the Royal Household would say Mass in their own private oratory. Ned's energy in using his alert wits to combat the religious opinions of certain Angelican divines had caused him to be heartily disliked in certain circles, and the extraordinary way in which he had risen to his present enviable position had made him the object of much jealousy, but, as a whole, life went smoothly and pleasantly in the little household at Stable Yard. People who live in intricate times seldom realise their environment as the subsequent reader of history does. The signs of the times did not greatly press on Madge Coleman in this August of the year 1678. She was meditating happily enough, on a temporary move into the country for a spell of quiet, when the door opened, and her husband entered, humming a ditty, as was his wont. Ned Coleman had not changed much. He was as long and lean as ever, and, although there were certain lines about his mouth and brow, he still looked amazingly boyish, in spite of his big black periwig.

"Ned," Margaret said, "I have a scolding waiting for you. I'm certain some of these papers of yours ought not to have been left lying about. I'm not sure that even Jerome Boatman ought to see them." Ned perused the papers referred to. "I hadn't meant to leave them out," he admitted, colouring slightly. "You ought to have more care for other people's secrets," his wife said, reprovingly. She was a very sensible lady, this Mrs. Edward Coleman.

"They have started another story about the Catholics," her husband remarked. "It is the most outrageous piece of effrontery to bring it to the King. It beats everything they have done before, these hare-brained fanatics. Poor Tonge is at the bottom of it. The King has been in convulsions ever since he heard it. They tried to make out

that he was to have been shot in the Park, and, as if that wasn't good enough, he was to be stabbed as well, and poisoned, so far as I can gather."

"Of course," Ned went on, "The Duke didn't see the humorous side of the thing, absurd, as it was. He counselled the King to have the whole tale sifted and put an end to once for all."

"I think he was right," Madge said. "After all, no lie is too outrageous to be believed against the Papists."

Her opinion was upheld by Richard Langhorne, the lawyer, when he came to sup with them that same night. "This fellow Oates, who has concocted the story, is no fool," he said. "You mark my words, he will find it easy enough to cram it down the public's throat. He evidently has some knowledge to go upon. That makes him really dangerous."

"He must be the fellow my young nephew advised me about," Ned said, "a rascal whom they had to turn out of St. Omer's after he had fooled the superiors with his smooth tongue. He had been previously turned away from the college at Valladolid, and his record in the Protestant Church doesn't bear repeating. The man is a monster, if it is the same." "Well then, beware of him," Mr. Langhorne said. "Believe me, Ned, the populace is ready to credit anything that is said against the Catholics at the present moment. Shaftesbury has been insiduously educating it for years, and this Oates has turned up at the identically right moment for the devil's purposes."

The departure of the King for Windsor brought a new development in the story that Dr. Tonge, with admirable patience, was endeavouring to impose upon His Majesty's credence. The rector of St. Michael's paid a second call on my Lord Danby and informed him that two assassins were bound for Windsor next morning to make away with the King. The assassins unluckily never reached Windsor. A curious succession of fatalities had attended them. The horse of one had hurt his shoulder, etc., etc. On the assassination being attempted later in London the flint of the miscreant's pistol got loose and he dared not fire. On

another occasion he had no powder in the pan, and such is the irony of fate, on a third there was powder but no bullets. For this string of misfortunes the luckless assassin had received thirty lashes as a penance from his Jesuit masters.

At the end of the month Mr. Coleman brought news to his wife of yet another development in the farce conducted by Dr. Tonge. This time an attempt was made to substantiate the charges brought forward. Letters had been posted to the Windsor Post Office, addressed to Father Bedingsfeld, the Duke of York's confessor, containing treasonable matter. These letters were to have been intercepted, but, the Jesuit, receiving the packet intact, found it to contain four letters purporting to have come from priests of his Society, but written in strange hand-writing, and from certain eccentricities of spelling, etc., transparent forgeries. These letters Father Bedingsfeld took straight to the Duke, who showed them to the King. The characteristic explanation that the writing was purposely disguised, and the ill-spelling and intentional ruse, such as a Jesuit would resort to, and therefore an additional proof that the letters were the work of Jesuits, was coldly received by the King. Altogether it began to appear that Dr. Oates and his confederate were likely to make little more than a laughing-stock of themselves.

On the second day of September Ned Coleman was making excessively merry over the story with his wife and Mr. Boatman, his secretary, when they received a visit from their old friend, Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, the magistrate.

"You are right welcome, Tedberry," Mr. Coleman cried. "Tell us the latest news of the Popish Plot. How goes Dr. Oates, has he yet made it clear where he won his degree?"

The magistrate received the pleasantry rather grimly.

"I have come to speak to you on that very subject," quoth he, and he glanced round suggesting that privacy would be desirable.

Madge grasped the situation, and dismissed her husband

and her guest to the privy closet. Even there, the magistrate seemed anxious to ensure against other ears. He started quite nervously on catching sight of Ned's periwig on its stand in the corner, and sent its owner off into fits of laughter. Sir Edmund, however, was in no laughing mood. "Are you aware," he said, "that you are being plotted against by the vilest pair of scoundrels that I ever met in my life? This Tonge, and the man Oates, have been to me to-day with a tissue of falsehoods, which they swore to before me in my capacity of magistrate. The information ran to about eighty-three articles. They did not leave a copy with me, but, among others, charged with conspiring to murder the King, and overthrow the Government your name occurs." He gave Mr. Coleman a short outline of the contents of the deposition.

Ned stared at his visitor, and then once more broke into laughter. "But why vex yourself like this, Tedberry?" he asked. "Who will believe an egregious pack of lies like that?"

"All England," Sir Edmund said, laconically. "Believe me, as I stand here, we haven't seen the end of this. Be you warned, Ned, and give them no handle against you."

"But they make their own handles," Ned laughed. "I can't feel as discomfited as I ought—Why, Tedberry, England hasn't gone mad yet!"

"England is going mad," the magistrate replied. "Mark my words, you Catholics will be in bitter straits before the month is out. Remember this Oates has been at St. Omer's—he has a knowledge of certain things that are true enough."

"But the statement is a lie from beginning to end," Ned cried, "there is not a syllable of truth in it!"

The magistrate regarded his friend narrowly.

"Tell me this," he said. "Did the Jesuits really meet in London last April at the White Horse Tavern as these fellows swear?"

"Not at the White Horse Tavern," Ned replied, "the meeting was held in the Duke's apartments at St. James'."

"Ah," Sir Edmund said. Then he added, "You have

told me too much, Ned, but I should not have asked.”—He sighed heavily.—“It will be little bits of truth like this item that your Jesuits do not care to explain away, that will be your undoing.”

Ned could not but admire the magistrate’s shrewdness. It would indeed be mighty awkward if it did transpire that the Consult had been held in the Duke’s apartments—he had seen the folly of it himself at the time. This unknown informer with his cock-and-bull tales might be more dangerous than he suspected, after all.

Sir Edmund’s grave demeanour had a sobering effect on Mr. Coleman’s levity on the whole. In a few days the magistrate’s sombre prophecies began to show signs of being realised. Margaret, who had been vaguely disquieted all along by the stories Ned brought her of Dr. Tonge’s inventions, sat waiting for the latest news one afternoon, perhaps a fortnight later, when Ned arrived home in a more perturbed state of mind than she had yet seen him.

“The Duke has been and made a mess of the whole thing,” he said, seating himself in his chair without even removing the cumbersome wig that his wife always insisted was unnecessarily voluminous even for a secretary to a ducal household. “The King was killing the thing with contempt—it couldn’t have lived another week—every fresh statement made it more egregious—but the Duke must needs interfere and insist on the whole thing being laid before the Privy Council. The Council has its reasons for getting its knife into Danby, and it has been pleased to say that he has been hushing up this plot—which is quite untrue, for Danby was as eager over the sifting of the affair as the Duke himself—he had a game to play, too. Parliament will get hold of it now and give the absurdity the foothold in men’s minds that it required—they will treat this mad fable quite seriously for their own ends.” Mr. Coleman was looking as grave as Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey himself could have wished. The little maiden Clare had slipped into the room, and creeping up behind her father’s chair she climbed up and gently lifted the

appendage, that lent such dignity to his person, from his head and putting it on her own enveloped the greater part of her own person in it. In this manner she proceeded to strut about the room.

"How now," her father cried, catching sight of the odd apparition, "they will take you for a bogey, Clarekin! Everyone is waiting to see bogeys, and they will carry you off to scare poor Dr. Tonge."

The fearsome mass of blackness divided and innocence itself peeped out and laughed roguishly at the speaker. Clare relinquished her disguise and climbing on to her father's knee rubbed her tumbled head against his vest (conceived and cut by Mr. Pepys senior). "Tell me about the bogey," she said.

"Once upon a time," her father said, "there was a great king whose kingdom was laid under a spell by a wicked fairy so that all the very very good people appeared to be very very bad, and all the very very bad people were thought to be very very good."

"What happened to them all?" Clare asked, with a child's passion for getting to the point.

"I can't tell you yet, Clarekin," the narrator replied, "for I don't know myself. I must finish the story another day."

CHAPTER VI

THE Colemans had contrived that the community at Gravelines should be kept posted up with information as to the progress of the new attack on the Catholics of England. This had been made easy through John Mitton and Phyllis who had gone on a visit to Gravelines to see the Mother, now arrived at an advanced stage in her sickness that gave grave anxiety to her friends. John Mitton had prospered in his business, thanks to the patronage of Sir Edmund Godfrey, and to his own sterling qualities, and he had now become a man of substance, so far as a Catholic could be in those days. They were expected to return to Wildwood every day, and Madge and her husband anxiously awaited the latest news of the beloved invalid. What would she say to the new development—to the egregious “plot” which had already had the effect of reviving the enactment of the penal laws and the active persecution of Catholics which of latter years had practically fallen into abeyance?

When a letter addressed in Phyllis’s hand-writing was handed to Margaret, delivered post haste by a special messenger, she tore it open, eager to communicate the contents to her husband.

She gave a little cry. “Oh, Ned, Ned, the Mother is here in England, in London! They have brought her over with them—she insisted—but she is very, very ill. They are staying at John’s old lodgings in Aldermanbury. The Mother was too ill to travel on to Wildwood last night, and she wouldn’t let them bring her here. They had to make the crossing to Harwich, and the journey has

nearly killed her, Phyllis says, but she would come—all on a sudden, and oh, Ned! Phyllis says it is the first time she has been wilful for nine years!”

She put the letter down and wept, and the tears gathered in Ned's eyes. But there was no time for indulging emotion with so practical a thing as the Mother's presence within a couple of miles in their minds. How on earth had the move been effected? Mistress Tyrwhit was as helpless as a baby, from rheumatism, and in addition to that she was suffering from a malady of a graver kind that made any extra exertion a danger to her very life. Full of anxiety as well as joy, Ned and Madge hastened to the City. The house in Aldermanbury was a gloomy one, standing cooped up in a sunless corner, like all city residences. It was kept by a worthy couple well disposed towards John Mitton and his religion. It would be as safe as anywhere for the proscribed lady who had returned to her native land by stealth, and who, consequently, had placed herself within reach of the law.

The Mother lay on her bed in a little room on the top floor. Madge all but cried out when she first saw the motionless form lying so perfectly still that the eyes only seemed to be alive. But the eyes! how live they were! And the Mother had not lost her smile. The seamed and shrunken face was, as it were, radiated by some inner beauty, that made Ned whisper to Phyllis as they followed behind Madge. “My God! how beautiful she has grown!”

“You see I am here,” the Mother whispered, giving her hand to Ned—she could barely lift it—the rheumatic malady held her from head to foot. “I have been good for nine years, but now I have broken the law again! I couldn't keep away,” she went on. “The old warhorse has sniffed the battle. I've come to help hide a priest. I am to be ‘Mistress Wild,’ and John and Phyllis ‘Mr. and Mrs. Wood.’ They have been good—John and Phyllis—and I don't know how they contrived to convey a clod like me. I had meant to go and hide at Wildwood, but—well, I am here.” Her eyes sought the narrow window

contentedly enough. London had been the scene of her earlier labours, before Wildwood fell to her lot, when she had lived with a little company of religious whose enclosure was Slumland. In those days opprobrium had overtaken them, even from their own, and they had been known among the clergy as "the galloping girls."

They had much to tell her about the new Plot and its progress.

How Oates, the informer, had blossomed out as a doctor of divinity and appeared in public in gown and bands, and was acclaimed by the people as a sort of hero and champion of the Protestant religion. It was generally believed that he was subsisting at Lord Shaftesbury's charges. "Ned, you must take care," the sick woman said, "for Madge's sake and little Clare's. You are a married man, not a priest. Let Will Ireland run his risk, it is his *métier*."

"You must see our little Clare," Ned said, willing to turn the subject, for the nature of the conversation was telling on her. She had become very exhausted. "Yes, bring her," she answered. "I must have a child—I haven't even my birds here."

On the 28th of September Mr. Coleman learned further details of the development of the Tonge-cum-Oates comedy, as he still elected to call it. Dr. Tonge had appeared that day before the Privy Council and introduced Dr. Titus Oates, the person who had, he solemnly declared, deposited the written deposition under the wainscote in the house at Vauxhall where he had discovered it, being himself staying there. The deposition was read, and the King had proceeded to cross-examine Dr. Oates to the utter undoing of the latter. Dr. Oates had contradicted himself in a number of points. For instance, he had described Don John of Austria, whom his fancy had drawn into the Plot, as being tall and graceful, with fair hair, whereas the King knew him to be short, stout, and dark. He had also placed the Jesuits' house in Paris near the Louvre, a mistake in locality that seriously depreciated the value of the story of what went on there. He had

hedged badly over the Bedingfeld letters when pressed by the King, and the latter had ended the meeting by pronouncing him "a most lying knave."

After such an episode the "Popish Plot" might reasonably have been expected to fall to the ground. Edward Coleman and his wife rejoiced in the news, which had filtered through the York household and so come into their possession before the world was apprised of Dr. Oates's unfortunate inaccuracies.

But once again the equanimity of the little establishment in Stable Yard was destined to be upset by its friend and well-wisher, Edmund Berry Godfrey. Late in the afternoon Mr. Coleman received a message from the latter bidding him come and see him without delay.

Ned found the magistrate even more grave and concerned than on the previous occasion.

He produced a copy of the deposition, which the informers had left with him that same morning, and gave it to Ned, bidding him read it through. It certainly gave the latter to gasp. The audacity and the completeness of the story fairly took his breath away. Without a jot or tittle of corroborative evidence the informers had contrived to draw up a statement, complete in detail and possessing the most convincing qualities. A list was given with the names of all those involved in the great Plot which was to overthrow both King and government and establish the Duke of York on the Throne. In the scheme all the offices in Church and state were filled in anticipation by Popish ecclesiastics and noble lords suspected of Popery, and Ned found his own name set down as Secretary of State. The audacity of the thing was overwhelming, the skill, moreover, displayed in the whole arrangement could not but win a sort of respect for the devilish cleverness of it all. Ned understood now how Oates had contrived to obtain credence in spite of his obvious falsehoods and self-contradictions.

"Ned, my boy," the magistrate said, "just take my advice, go home and look through your papers and destroy whatever might be used against you."

"But there is nothing in my papers," Mr. Coleman answered, with something akin to reproach in his voice.

"Nothing that a prejudiced mind could read into them?" the Magistrate suggested.

"But if it should be proved that I had been destroying papers in my possession," Ned objected, "would not that in itself prove something against me, and most unjustly, too?"

The Magistrate shrugged his shoulders. "I have warned you," he said. "Ned, I have done this at some risk to myself. These scoundrels like me not—I confounded them more than once over their statement, and they would gladly see me hence. They came to me because it suited them to have someone who would act straitly and obtain credit—I have that reputation, God be thanked, but they found that a sincere Protestant Churchman need not of necessity be a bigot, and I was more concerned in showing justice to the Papists than they had bargained for. I have had you here, my boy, to warn you, for your sake, and your wife's." Ned listened, and for the first time a cold fear gripped at his heart. Sir Edmund, he knew, was subject to melancholy moods—it was in his family, but this was no mere fit of nervous depression.

"But I am innocent," he protested. "They cannot hurt me!" Still the unnamed fear gripped his heart.

The other laid his hand on his shoulder. "My dear, dear boy," he said. "Try to realise your position and remember that you are a husband and a father. Go home now and burn your papers—all of them, and God be with you!"

Then he did a thing not so foreign to Englishmen of that period as ours. He placed his other arm round Ned's neck and kissed him on the cheek.

They never met again.

CHAPTER VII

EDWARD COLEMAN left the Magistrate's house filled with a sense of impending evil. There were no evening papers in those days, but news had a way of getting abroad, all the same. Ned found the streets of London alive with anxious citizens throbbing with terrified curiosity as to the result of the Examination of the Informers. He turned into a coffee-shop and learned from the company there what was news to him, viz., that Dr. Oates had received a mandate to search London for concealed priests and effect the arrest of the Jesuit Ireland, and Whitebread, the Provincial of the Society. He made due haste home. Madge would be waiting to hear for what reason Sir Edmund had sent for him, he must relieve her anxiety. He found his wife, however, with no ears for his story. A message had come from Phyllis, a half-hour since, with the direful tidings that the Mother was worse. She could not live many hours, and she wished to see her children once more. Madge had her out-door things on. She was brave and calm, as was her wont. "I should have left a message and gone on," she said, "if you had not come. I have ordered the chariette."

Mr. Curzen, the coachman, brought the chariette round to the door; it was a light vehicle that replaced the coach on lesser occasions, and they set off there and then, forgetful for the time being of aught else than the parting that lay before them—the parting with one who, next to each other, they loved better than any on earth.

The Lady of Wildwood lay *in extremis*. They had brought her word than an order was out for the arrest of

William Ireland and his fellow-priests, and excitement had resulted in an attack from which there had been small hope of a rally from the first. William Ireland, Phyllis told them, lay at his mother's house in Russell Street, against Montague House. John had taken a message there offering him asylum in the house at Aldermanbury—the Mother had insisted, and he would also beg the father to bring the Viaticum for the dying woman. "God grant he may come," Phyllis said. "It is her one need now, the Holy Viaticum. She asks and desires nothing else."

They found the Mother lying motionless with closed eyes. She just knew them and that was all. They sat by her bedside as the hours passed, asking themselves if William Ireland would be in time. Every now and again the dying woman would open her eyes and ask dumbly the same question. The craving for the "food for the journey" was almost terrible in its intensity. The eyes became pained and restless as the hours went by. At last Ned in a frenzy was fain to go forth and find a priest. But where could a priest be found on a night like this? Even the privileged clergy attached to the Royal chapels would not be exempt from the peril attached to the execution of their sacred functions—yea, not even Father Huddleston himself! None the less Ned started out. He could bear himself no longer. Perhaps he might find Father Huddleston.

The others, Margaret and Phyllis, remained to watch their dear one. The patient, expectant eyes fixed themselves on the door, and so they sat into the small, chill hours of the night.

Then suddenly there came a knocking at the door. Phyllis slipped down and opened it gently. It was roughly thrust wide and a cloaked figure stalked in, followed by others. Phyllis shrunk back petrified with horror. "We have advice," a horrible drawling voice said, "that the Jesuit traitor Ireland is like to visit here to-night. We hold a warrant to search this house."

It was said in a cautious undertone, and the intruders crept upstairs quietly enough. They evidently hoped to

surprise the priest in his hiding-place. Madge and the dying woman had no suspicion of the nature of the intrusion. Phyllis had no means of warning them. They heard steps approach the door and the Lady of Wildwood fixed her eyes on the portal, and a faint, very faint tinge of colour came into her cheeks.

Then the door was thrown open and on the threshold there stood Titus Oates the informer.

Margaret gave a little horrified cry. The apparition was so unutterably hideous, apart from the fearsome import of the midnight visit.

The arch-perjurer stood there, with his large yellow face, his small sunken eyes, and revolting fish-like expression, leering at the figure lying on the bed.

The calm, gentle eyes rested on him for fully a minute, scrutinizing the intruder. Then there came into them a blaze of light. They were glowing like burning coals with a magnificent indignation, with the anger which is as the wrath of God.

With her eyes still fixed on the apparition, the Notorious Lady slowly lifted her hand. She succeeded in reaching a sponge soaked in holy water placed by the side of the bed.

She had not lifted so much as a finger for days. Taking the sponge she deliberately aimed it at the figure before her. "Leave this house," she cried out in steady tones. "I bid you leave this place in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost!"

The sponge just grazed the hem of the cloak that the informer was wearing, but as it did so he reeled back as though he had been shot. A shudder went through his whole frame. His features became contorted in a fashion most horrible to witness. It seemed to Madge, watching the scene, petrified, that a hot blast of air had swept over the room. A faint, unspeakable scent, too, appeared to assail her olfactory sense for a moment. An unnameable horror seemed to be present.

Then the intruder gave a low, hoarse cry, almost a snarl—a cry with nothing human in it. He receded backward,

his eyes still fixed on the calm face lying white against the snowy pillow. Then he turned on his heel and fled downstairs, screaming to his attendants, "I'm taken ill, see to me, I'm taken ill. Get me out of this!"—and there followed a hideous string of blasphemy from which even the brutal officers recoiled.

Mistress Clare Tyrwhit had exorcised the demon which was in Titus Oates, but it had taken Titus Oates with it to work its will in other places that lacked the potent sanctity of perfected sacrifice.

The intruders had not been gone more than three minutes when John Mitton arrived with William Ireland and Ned, whom they had met returning from his vague and futile quest. There was no fear of their former visitors returning, Madge knew, although she felt unable just then to describe the unearthly episode that had left her still trembling like a leaf, and faint with the horror of it all. Father Ireland had brought the Holy Viaticum and the dying woman made her communion. Then she lay still and they waited for the end.

About an hour later she opened her eyes and looked at Madge.

"You are wearing the habit of the Blue nuns," she said. "I thought it would have been the Poor Clares."

A great pang shot through Margaret's heart. She glanced across at Ned, but he had not caught the whispered words. She was thankful. How can a wife become a nun save that she first become a widow?

A few minutes later the Mother opened her eyes again. "Hark!" she said, "they are singing Lauds for the Dead."

A tense silence fell on the room, and somewhere behind and beyond the silence, in no wise breaking it, they heard—Phyllis and Madge, Ned and John, all heard—the far-off strains of the Office for the Dead as it was chanted by the Franciscan nuns at Gravelines—as they would be chanting

it at this very moment.* Inexpressibly sweet, they heard it—the very words themselves—with perfect distinctness! The Mother lay drinking it in. Were they hearing with her ears? Surely that was Rose chanting now? That rich, low voice? It was the last antiphon:—

“Ego sum resurrectio et vita qui credit in me, etiam si mortuus fuerit vivet.”

The sounds died away. The dying woman lay still, breathing gently. There was no reason to suppose that the agony might not be prolonged even yet, but as the last note ceased there came a swift eager look into the calm face. She appeared to wait a moment, then her eyes sought William Ireland, in the old imperious manner—with the unspoken request that ever won compliance.

He was on his knees at the bed-side. Instinctively, he obeyed—did the required thing, as it were by force of habit. Almost unvoluntarily, he breathed the words, giving forth the mandate with which the Church sends the soul on its long journey, freeing it, as it were, from the toils of death:—“Go forth, Christian soul, from this world in the Name of God the Father who created thee: in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost who was poured out on thee—in the name of the angels and arch-angels.”

She closed her eyes. The head inclined a little forward among the pillows, almost as though she were making acknowledgment in her gracious way of the service rendered—“in the name of holy apostles and evangelists, —in the name of holy virgins”—There was a little sigh, —“May thy place be this day in peace and thy abode in holy Sion!”—But the soul of the exiled lady had already reached its native land.

*This incident is authentically recorded as having happened to Mistress Powell in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The Lady was a zealous Catholic and devoted to the Franciscan Order. On her death-bed, and all present heard the Franciscans at St. Omer chanting the Office for the Dead.

CHAPTER VIII

MARGARET COLEMAN never forgot the day following the Mother's death. It was a Sunday, and the Feast of St Michael and all Angels—Mistress Tyrwhit's "feast" would coincide with that of the patron saint of fighters. They returned to Stable Yard in the early hours of the morning. William Ireland had hastened back to Russell St. as he had promised to say Mass at dawn for his mother and sister and their household, who were devout Catholics. The search, if search there had been, would probably have been conducted in his absence. He had been once delivered out of the enemies' hands that night, almost by a miracle, it might almost be taken as a sign that he was meant to escape this time.

Ned found himself compelled to set about the business which had arisen through the crisis. He spent the morning, as the historians are careful to tell us, driving about town in his coach, visiting Lord Arundel and others implicated in the Oates allegations. He returned in the afternoon, worn out and harrassed, and he and Madge sat together and awaited events. One direful piece of news had already come to hand. Father Ireland had been arrested by Oates and his men in the early hours of the morning, entering a house in Russell Street. The latter had conducted an extensive priest-hunt all night and was, rumour said, prostrated with fatigue. A strange sickness had, in fact, got hold of Dr. Oates and one which, with exemplary thrift, he utilised later as forming an explanation for certain eccentricities in his evidence when cross-examined as to subsequent events.

It was a bad blow. They had made their thanksgiving for William Ireland's preservation from the intruder at the house in Aldermanbury, only to be greeted by news of his

subsequent capture. "If Rose were here," Madge said. "She would say God means something by it. He only condescends to play games with His special friends." She looked at her husband and remembered that Brother Juniper, with whom she so often teasingly compared him, was called by Francis "God's plaything," and found herself wondering of what divine sport he might be made the instrument?

They said their Little Office together that evening, for the first time since many days. Margaret had suggested that perhaps Ned ought to use the time in going through his papers in case of any of a dangerous nature being there, but Ned inclined to the Little Office. "If I burn one I burn all," he said. "No, Madge, let us be Franciscans for this once, and a plague on the world and its affairs!" So they let the papers be, and recited the Holy Hours, and Vespers for the dead in union with the prayers that John and Phyllis would be saying in the little top room, now a holiest of holies.

They had little Clare with them. Clare delighted in assisting at her parent's devotions, especially as her pets, a cat and a small fluffy puppy, were also permitted to be present and to "assist" in the diverting way peculiar to their kind.

It was very tender and fragrant, that evening in the little oratory. When it was over and they came downstairs, they were met by Jerome Boatman. He held a sealed missive in his hand. It was from the Duchess of York. The contents were brief, and there was no signature:—

"I have just heard that a warrant is out for your arrest."

"Ned, Ned," his wife said. "Where will you go?" "Where will you be safe?"

"And your papers?" Jerome Boatman gasped, "they will most like search the house, and they might come across something."

"Across what?" Mr. Coleman asked. "I am an honest man, Jerry, what can they prove against me save

that I am a good Catholic?" He drew himself up, and instinctively looked round for his periwig. "I am not afraid of my Lords of the Council," said he.

The little Clare here interposed. She had the puppy and the cat, one under each arm. "Cousin Dick says that he is going to give me a live donkey," she said, "I am going to call him Brother Juniper. Will he be allowed to come to prayers too?"

On the following morning Mr. Coleman ordered his coach and drove to Aldermanbury. He returned in about an hour. There had been business to transact with John Mitton—personal and unofficial business.

Madge had passed a sleepless night, expecting every moment a visit from the King's officers. Oh, the irony of that usage of the king's name! Who knew so well as the king the absolute loyalty and devotion of her husband against whom they had thought in their folly to issue a warrant? Why, Ned was the king's own man—her Ned! She had kissed the sleeping face softly many times, for Ned was sleeping from sheer fatigue. He was so young, so like a child in many ways, for all the high position and the responsibilities that his talents and intellect had won for him. He woke the mother passion as well as the wifely one; and he was to be taken from her and perhaps kept away for months. To such straits had indiscreet meddlers in politics come before now. The Tower might be his home for many days to come. The Tower was not necessarily an uncomfortable residence, but the separation!—she dreaded the separation. They had never been separated for any length of time—she had even accompanied her husband on his recent trip to Warwickshire, to My Lord Denbeigh's and Sir John Fisher's—business journeys both of them.

Ned kept the coach at the door while he came in and proceeded to change his apparel. He had been about his business in ordinary morning garb, for the exact nature of which the reader is best referred to Mr. Pepy's diary, which so far as one remembers, covers all such exigencies; but he now assumed full dress. He donned his best suit, and

the big black periwig, and reappeared irreproachably attired in black velvet and white cambric. He entered his coach. Mrs. Coleman stood on the door-step. She waved to him, smiling. "To Westminster Hall," he said to Mr. Curzen. The latter gasped.

"To Westminster Hall," Mr. Coleman repeated, and adjusted his three-cornered hat on his head in the correct way. He waved again to Margaret. She was still smiling. Clare was there, too. She had climbed on to the balustrade, and with the officiousness of extreme youth she produced her pocket-handkerchief and proceeded to wipe the smiling lady's eyes.

Mr. Curzen whipped up his horses (the pair had been ordered) and set forth to cover the purely negligible distance between Stable Yard and Westminster Hall.

CHAPTER IX

MR. EDWARD COLEMAN came off exceedingly well in his first examination before the Lord's Council. There was a frankness and a fearlessness in his demeanour that made a favourable impression on his hearers, with the exception of Mr. Oates, with whom he was confronted. It seemed extremely likely that Mr. Coleman would go free. As it was he was placed in the charge of a messenger, a formal precaution more or less equivalent to being let out on bail.

While her husband was being examined Margaret Coleman was undergoing an experience of an equally trying character.

A warrant had been made out for the seizure of Mr. Coleman's papers. It had been an afterthought of my Lord Danby's and was obtained in haste at the last moment—in another minute the five lords whose signatures were necessary for such a document would have departed. My Lord Danby was in luck's way, however, and the warrant was duly signed.

Acting on this warrant, Mrs. Coleman received a visit from one Mr. Bradley and his minions. It was a most unpleasant and offensive business. Ned's papers were strewn everywhere. There were boxes crammed with them. Margaret hated the searchers cordially. The insult, the sacrilege of the thing infuriated her. There might be letters amongst these from Rose, from poor Will Throckmorton, from the Mother herself!

The searchers brought a sack with them and into this every paper that they could lay hands upon was thrust. They had ended their search, and were in the act of taking themselves off when yet another discovery was made of an old deal box lying in an aperture under the floor, Ned's

hiding-places were quite ingenious when he became snowed up with literary débris. The contents of this box were poured in their entirety into a second sack and the mouth sealed. Even in the midst of her indignation Madge could not help being amused at the pomposity of it all. Dear Ned's remarkably facile pen perpetrated so much literary small beer, among other things, and he seldom destroyed what he wrote. It was really comical to see it all being so carefully treasured. There was a grotesqueness, a want of proportion, about everything connected with this preposterous Oates affair! The bogey was as mis-shapen as the imp on a gargyle!

Madge got a cheerful message from Ned that evening to say that all was well. The informers had not been able to obtain one single jot or tittle of evidence to support their assertions, and their case was certain to fall to the ground for lack of any corroborative evidence. The seizure of his papers Mr. Coleman treated with equanimity.

On the following day Margaret Coleman woke up to find London in a state of panic. A rumour had gone abroad that among the papers seized at Mr. Coleman's house had been found the fullest corroboration of Mr. Oates's story, and indubitable proof of the existence of a Popish Plot.

October the first, sixteen hundred and seventy-eight was destined to be one of the fullest days in Margaret Coleman's life. One of those days which seem to put to the test exactly how much human endurance can bear without giving out. In the morning there was the sorrowful duty of following the remains of Mistress Tyrwhit to the grave. The burial of Catholics in those days was no easy matter.

John Mitton, thanks perhaps to the influence of his former employer, Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, had been able to secure a grave on the north side of the Churchyard of St. Giles in the fields—a spot where Catholics occasionally found hospitality for their dead, including some of those who died on the gallows for their faith. It was a fitting resting-place enough for the Lady of Wildwood.

Madge first realised the condition of things as she drove to Aldermanbury in her charioteer. The whole of London was tense with the expectation of a coming horror. Any moment might witness a rising of the Catholics, backed by an invading army from France, and the wholesale massacre of the Protestant population. She saw the little knots of people standing at the street-corners, and even caught the words, "Coleman's letters," as her vehicle came to a standstill close to the pavement where a crowd was collected round some special news-monger.

She was sensitive enough to feel the atmosphere of malice and hatred as well as of deadly fear, and the horror of it turned her cold. The state of things which an author later described as "Hell let loose" was in its incipient stage, and Margaret Coleman made her first acquaintance with it as she drove through the City to follow the Mother to the grave.

It was a pitiful little cortège. Secrecy above all things was necessary. Father Ireland had read the burial service over the body before he left on that fateful night, and blessed a little earth to be thrown into the grave. There was no one at the grave-side save themselves—John, Phyllis, and Margaret, and the grave-diggers, but they were thankful that they were spared the offices of the rector. The interment was strictly "unofficial." The registers would take no note of it. The sexton made a little by these *sub rosa* acts of hospitality.

As they drove swiftly away from the bleak north corner of the church's sequestered acre, a cry assailed their ears—men shouted news in those days, albeit that the "extra special" had not come into being—"Committal of Mr. Coleman to Newgate!"

Madge thrust her head out of the window. "Drive straight to Whitehall," she told Mr. Curzen. "I must see the Duchess," she said to the other. "She will get me an audience with the King."

They drove on to Whitehall, and there dropped Margaret at the gate leading to the Duchess's apartments.

It was a pale ghost of the little Princess of Modena who

greeted Mrs. Coleman. The reign of terror had begun for the Popish Duchess who was believed to be at the back of many of the schemes for making Popery the State religion. She was able to tell Margaret something of the nature of the charges that stood against her secretary. It seemed that a correspondence with the French King's confessor had been discovered among Mr. Coleman's papers that pointed to the existence of a political plot for the subversion of the Protestant Government of England. The letters had been written as long as five years back, and their language was held to be highly treasonable. Mr. Coleman had been transferred to Newgate the moment that their purport became known.

Madge was vehement in defence of her husband. "What could there be in his letters that could be called treason," she protested.

The little Duchess looked troubled. "Mr. Coleman was not discreet," she said, sadly. "The Duke had to warn him many times. He has even confessed to writing letters in my husband's name without his permission."

Madge gazed at her in perplexity. A dull horror overtook her. There seemed to be no bottom to these mysteries of political intrigue. Both Ned and the Duke were men of honour. Where was the truth?—What was the explanation? The very ground on which she was standing seemed to be slipping from her feet.

She threw herself on her knees by the side of the Duchess. "I must see the king," she said, "Oh, take me to the king!—now!"

"The King!" the Duchess echoed. "The King is not here! The King has gone this morning to Newmarket. He has gone to the races!"

CHAPTER X

ON the day following his committal to Newgate Mr. Edward Coleman received a visit from his wife. The latter found him in quite his best form, looking exceedingly boyish without his big black wig. Perhaps Mr. Coleman realised as little as anyone could do the gravity of his position. "Did they seize our love-letters, Madge?" he asked, playfully, "and what treason have they found in them?" They could not well talk of yesterday's other event before the turnkey, so they just talked of home affairs and were boy and girl together. It was so good to see Ned again, and hear him talk, sitting there on the rickety table with his legs swinging. The sight of Newgate had turned her heart sick. The metropolitan prison was very different from the Tower. It was associated with crime and villainy—with the sordid misdeameanours of the multitude. The Mother had gone proudly enough to Lewes Jail, but humiliation and disgrace seemed to connect themselves with her husband's committal to Newgate for plotting against his master the King. The cell was a passably decent one. "I fear," Ned said, "that poor Will Ireland is not so well housed as I am. They have put him underground, and they say he is wearing irons—but that won't worry him—he is suffering for the faith."

"And so are you," Madge answered.

She was able to tell him something of the dementia that had seized hold of the City. How Dr. Oates had been lodged at Whitehall with a guard to protect him, and Londoners were awaiting an invasion from France with the same certainty that they were awaiting their dinners.

"Which of my papers is it that has given them this

fright?" Mr. Coleman asked. "I gave them the key to my cipher so that they might read them all."

She replied in an undertone. "It was something written to King Louis's confessor. They say you took much on yourself, and that you spoke of the overthrowing of Protestantism."

Mr. Coleman sat with his eyes fixed on her. His legs stopped swinging. "I'd forgotten them," he whispered. "What does the King say?" Mr. Edward Coleman was quite properly grave at last.

"The King has gone to Newmarket as usual," his wife answered.

She made such arrangements as she could for the prisoner's greater comfort. "You may as well take my periwig home with you," Ned said, "I have nowhere to keep it here, and (with a grimace) this place isn't over-clean!"

So it was that Mrs. Coleman returned to Westminster bearing with her the insignia of her husband's social success, against the next occasion when he might be required to wear it. "When you come next," he had said to her, "you might bring me what you find in the bottom drawer of my bureau!" He had looked away from her as he said this, and she had fears that it might be more papers. She carried the precious periwig to the same bottom drawer to put it away. In it she found a smallish brown bundle. It was a Franciscan "little habit" made of remarkably prickly hair cloth—the same that she had washed with her own hands for its owner in the early days of their married life. The knotted cord that had spoiled Mr. Coleman's figure lay with it. Mrs. Coleman, who had stoutly resisted the traditions of her sex during the last forty-eight hours, and had neither fainted nor wept, sat herself down on the floor beside the bottom drawer and "pickled" the knotted cord with the long pent-up tears which now at length found vent.

As the days went by the hideous nightmare moved towards its climax. Englishmen have always possessed a fine capacity for hysteria beneath their appearance of

stolid commonsense. The same mob which, some two-hundred years later, indulged in the mental ebullition known as "Mafficking" rushed to Whitehall and made a people's darling of Titus Oates, saviour of the Nation. The loathsomeness of the image set up for worship gave a peculiar horror to the revolting dementia which had seized on the mind of England.

The fact that the informer's unspeakable past---unspeakable even in that outspoken age---was known to all, and that he had been constantly detected in falsehood, had no effect on the devil-ridden populace. Veritably Hell was let loose! It seemed that there was nothing left that could add to the terrors of the existing situation.

About a fortnight after Mr. Coleman's arrest, as Margaret sat in the little room where she and Ned had so often spent their evenings, a visitor was announced. An unnamed visitor possessed sinister possibilities for the Coleman household. It might be the summons that she and Jerome Boatman were expecting, to appear before the council for examination. With a certain degree of apprehension Margaret betook herself to the apartment where the mysterious caller was waiting.

The first glance was not reassuring. The muffled figure of a black-bearded man stood there. It was not until he spoke that Madge got the key to his identity. It was none other than Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey disguised behind a false beard and muffler. His face was drawn and hollow enough to have been a sufficient disguise in itself.

He surveyed Mrs. Coleman with a pair of haunted eyes that fairly turned her blood cold.

"Sir Edmund," she gasped. "What is the matter?"

"I am a marked man," he answered, "but I had need to come and see you, Mrs. Coleman. It's all over with Ned!"

Madge gave a little cry. She imagined that he had brought some specific information, but he went on, gloomily. "He has fallen into the hands of the greatest liar outside Hell, and he has condemned himself out of his

own mouth, in his letters—and many others as well who will hang with him.”

“Why do you come to tell me all this?” Margaret asked, resentfully, but the knight continued in lugubrious tones:

“Those letters have been the undoing of everybody. They exactly supplied the evidence that was lacking. If Oates had forged them they could not have served his purpose better; but your husband confesses to having written them. It is the greatest blow that the Catholic cause could have received.”

“But where does the danger to yourself come in?” Madge asked, still resentful. “You are not a Catholic.”

“Do you not know,” Sir Edmund said, “it is as much as a man’s life is worth even to cast a doubt on this plot?—There are men lying in the Tower at this moment for questioning it—I held Oates’s deposition in my keeping for a month before I divulged it. I am a marked man, Mrs. Coleman!”

The London of October 1678 had clearly got on Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey’s nerves. By nature he was the most fearless of men. Was it not he who had pursued a fugitive criminal into a pest-house, and he who had refused to leave the city during the time of the Plague? But the diabolism that had besotted the ordinary citizen had reduced him to this! It was a very terrible thing to witness.

Margaret felt her heart go out to him, in spite of his jeremiads.

“If my husband is in danger,” she said gently, “the King will surely intervene.”

“The King has thrown him to the wolves,” Godfrey said, grimly. “Ned is a scapegoat, and he will play the game to the death. Don’t look for Royal intervention. It isn’t in the bill of this play.”

“You have brought me sorry consolation,” the wife said reproachfully. “But as for yourself, Sir Edmund, remember you are a staunch Protestant—Ned never succeeded in converting you”—she smiled wanly.

The knight held out his hand. "Farewell, Mrs. Coleman," he said.

Margaret accompanied him to the door and watched the tall, once upright, figure of the fearless Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey as he slunk away from the house, muffled up in his disguise, glancing furtively right and left. There was something uncannily horrible in this spectacle of the unmanned knight. Had England truly become an inferno!

Ten days later the body of Edmund Berry Godfrey was found in a ditch at the foot of Primrose Hill transfixed by his own sword.

CHAPTER XI

MARGARET continued to be allowed access to her husband in Newgate. The full purport of the Coleman letters had now been published and England was seething with the discovery. Mr. Coleman's name had become a household word. Copies of "Mr. Coleman's characters," a very elementary cipher in which was written the edifying sentence "God save the King," were sold to the public, and ballads recounting the crimes of the same Mr. Coleman were printed and sold by the hundred. Indeed it would appear that Mr. Coleman seemed likely to achieve the fame of Dr. Oates in the opposite direction—as an unadulterated villain. As for Dr. Oates he had been provided with a royal pension, and fared sumptuously at the tables of lords and prelates, the latter finding the "Salamanca doctor's" sense of humour as displayed after a liberal repast, a trifle embarrassing, or so it was whispered by the scandalmongers.

Madge found her greatest trial in the attitude taken towards her husband by his own friends. The Duke of York was frankly disgusted with his former secretary. He himself had become the object of a thinly-veiled suspicion through the former's indiscretion. It was just a chance that the informers had decided that the Duke was to be represented as plotted against and not plotting. It was generally held among Ned's friends that he was suffering from his own folly, and the inflated idea of his own

importance which had led him to make overtures to the French Court on his own responsibility.

The Père de la Colombiere had been obliged to send young Dick Coleman back to this people at Burnt Ely, the very presence of a kinsman of Mr. Coleman's being a menace to his household. It was a poor outlook for Dick, to whom his uncle still remained a hero among heroes. Robert Coleman had kept severely aloof from his brother in his disgrace but Mr. Roger Coleman, with sterling good nature had obtained a permit to visit his cousin in jail. Roger begged Ned to confess, with naive frankness; and was utterly bewildered by his kinsman's denial of any knowledge of a plot. Plotting seemed a normal enough thing, but why not turn King's evidence and live like a fighting cock, like Oates himself, and let some of the others take their turn in jail? There must be someone bigger than Ned Coleman behind it all, Roger opined shrewdly—why not show the whole thing up since the game was played out?

As for our hero. The solitude of his prison was working a change in Mr. Coleman. Madge noticed, with a queer gripping at her heart, that Ned was growing more and more like the Ned of early days—the old happy days when they tried to realise the Franciscan ideal among their new surroundings. He cheerfully vetoed certain articles that she had wanted to bring to furnish his cell. "No, no, Madge," he said, "I am going to be a true Franciscan at last. Jacopone sang his best songs in prison—I'm going to be a real live son of Francis and enjoy myself now that I can be as poor as I like. Let Oates take the gold pieces. It is the dross that has got me into this pother. Old Giles will chuckle, if he isn't in Heaven yet. Madge, you should never have let me find my purse that day. Lady Poverty is an uncommon charming dame!" He looked round on his bare wall with much pride and satisfaction.

"But, Ned," she reminded him. "You are being robbed of more than your purse. It is your honour, your

good name! Oh, the things that they are saying about you!"

"What things?" Mr. Coleman asked quickly, and she told him a few—a mitigated recital. "It is a compliment to be held a miscreant by such a demented crew," was his answer, and then she told him how his friends also had found him "too busy." Poor Ned! he discovered then that there was a fine all-roundness about renunciation, a bare cell certainly didn't cover its possibilities.

"It seems that I'm no hero," he remarked, and just a little bitterly.

"Why be a hero?" his wife replied, "Dr. Oates is a hero, and Jacopone was—Jacopone!"

When Madge visited her husband on October the 15th she bore with her a piece of news of sufficient gravity. Sir Edmund Godfrey had disappeared from his home three days previously, and anxious enquiries as to his whereabouts were being made owing to the strangeness of his demeanour when last seen.

"He'll come back safe and sound," Ned said. "Solitude appeals to a man with his distemper. He is hiding himself for the nonce."

But Margaret could not forget the haunted eyes of the knight. It would have been impossible at that period, when all London jumped at the creaking of a door, so to speak, to view any event normally. London held its breath and watched with fascinated eyes for the solution of the mysterious disappearance of the Magistrate who held, it was assiduously whispered, the secrets of the Jesuits in his keeping, confided to him by the unutterable Coleman himself. On the morning of the twentieth day of October the country's overwrought nerves were thrilled afresh with the news of the discovery of the dead body of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey lying stabbed with his own sword, and (there was a completeness about the outrages of that day!) also strangled with his own neck-tie!

The knight's rings and purse were untouched. Robbery plainly was not the motive. The murder was at once set down to the Papists—to the people who were but waiting

a word to blow up Whitehall and burn down the Houses of Parliament. Motives mutually destructive, but found acceptable even by Statesmen of that day, let alone the mob, were put forward.

Sir Edmund had been murdered in order to strike terror into the hearts of Protestants, especially magistrates who should be instrumental in showing up other Popish plots, but the murder had been so arranged as to look like a case of suicide—thus, once again, was the craft and subtlety of the Jesuit demonstrated. Parliament men and the man in the street alike swallowed this ingenious theory—indeed, it would have shown a want of caution to have pointed out its inconsistency. Godfrey had been foully murdered by the Papists—his next of kin indignantly repudiated the possibility of suicide, which, if a verdict of *felo de se* were brought in, would deprive them of their right of succession—The body was paraded publicly through the streets of London, and a reward of £500 offered for the apprehension of the murderers.

To Edward Coleman in his cell there came little evidence of the quickened pulse of the public. Denied counsel, and, for lack of knowledge of the charges brought against him, unable to prepare his defence, he gave himself up to other matters and surveyed existence with the truer perspective that a prison cell offers. Madge marked another change in him. He was her old boy-lover still—but to his boyishness he had added a certain dignity which was not the dignity of Mr. Coleman, gent. She found him one day contemplating a caricature of himself which his jailor had been thoughtful enough to show him. It was accompanied by a string of choice doggerel, and presented in the picture Mr. Coleman staggering under a load of French gold while the doggerel set forth how the traitor had possessed himself of his wealth by a hypocritical assumption of piety. "See, Madge," he cried, "they have relieved me of my biggest load of dross." Nevertheless the bright black eyes were full of pain. Madge recognised a certain amount of bluff in his attitude. He sat looking at the wood-cut. "I daresay a good

many of my friends think that there is truth in it," he remarked—"that I got a good share of it for myself." Madge was silent. It was truer even than he guessed. Poor Ned!

CHAPTER XII

THE discovery of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey's murdered body gave a new impetus to the "Popish Plot." The King returned to London and an extremely nervey Parliament met to pass measures for the protection of His Majesty's Protestant subjects from Dr. Oates downward. The latter, after many vicissitudes, was having the time of his life. He renewed his depositions, with certain additions, before Parliament, and the two Houses gasped in unison, and issued orders for the deportation of all Papists, not householders, from within ten miles of the metropolis. An invading army was to be guarded against by the erection of posts and chains in all the city thoroughfares, while the orthodoxy of the King's cooks was to be carefully tested. Lord Shaftesbury and a Committee appointed for the purpose were given the congenial task of tracing the Plot to its source, and warrants were issued to search the houses of Catholics all over the country for weapons. "Informers" sprang up on every hand. The affluent position of Dr. Titus Oates was an incentive to every adventurer blessed with a lively imagination and a glib tongue to adopt the profession. The Test Act was again introduced, and, thanks to the influence on the public mind of the horrible revelations contained in the Coleman letters, passed at length into law, banishing those who failed to take the anti-Catholic oath from coming into the presence of the Sovereign. The Coleman correspondence was read aloud in Parliament.

The Duke of York's name was mentioned in many of the letters, but the latter was emphatic in his repudiation

of any knowledge of the intrigue. Public opinion, even in its distempered state, was inclined to accept the word of the late High Admiral. The verdict of the Upper House, after perusing the letters of Mr. Coleman written to the Père de la Chaise, confessor to the King of France, was that "there had been, and still was, a hellish and damnable plot contrived and carried on by Popish recusants for assassinating and murdering the king, and for subverting the Government and routing out the Protestant religion."

Within a few days a volunteer army of between forty and fifty thousand men stood ready to arms to protect London from the Papists, and about thirty thousand of the latter had been compelled to withdraw from within ten miles of the City.

It was through this panic-stricken London that the funeral procession of the murdered magistrate passed. Margaret Coleman, on her way to the City jail, met the cortège passing through the thronged streets. It was headed by seventy-two of the clergy in their full robes. At St. Martin's-in-the-Fields the Reverend Dr. Lloyd had preached a thrilling discourse on the text, "As a man falleth before the wicked soallest thou."

"Poor Sir Edmund!" Madge thought, "how little he would have relished the spirit thus displayed. Oh, the additional insult, to use his poor body thus after death in order to serve the ends of the monster who, directly or indirectly, had been the cause of his end!"

Margaret had been unable to get any assistance from the Duke. He regarded the result of his quondam secretary's meddling with perfectly reasonable annoyance and disgust. He washed his hands, in short, of busy Mr. Coleman and his intrigues, which latter included the forgery of his own name, as the freakish intriguer had had the effrontery to confess to him with his own lips! The return of the King, however, filled her with new hope. Many of Ned's friends in Parliament were anxious to get him off, if possible. A deputation had ventured to approach His Majesty on behalf of the imprisoned secretary. It was

well known that the King had no belief in the plot. Margaret had great hopes as to the result of the petition of her husband's Protestant friends. So also had Ned himself. He had taken to heart the sad news of Sir Edmund's terrible death, and had suffered considerably from depression, but the thought that the time had come when the King would intervene had cheered him up very considerably. He was more like his old self again than he had been since the news of the knight's death. Madge spared him as much as possible the details of the funeral, as she tried to spare him the full realisation of the extent to which he was responsible for the hold that the fictitious Plot had taken on the public mind.

She made haste to St James's to consult the Duchess of York as to the possible results of the petition. That adroit little lady had her own ideas as well as Madge, but unlike the latter, her knowledge of her Royal brother-in-law was more intimate. Her hopes were correspondingly moderate.

Mary Beatrice had already heard the result of the petition from her husband. The King had consented that a Committee should visit Mr. Coleman in Newgate and invite him to tell them all he knew concerning the plot, and carry with them the promise of a pardon in the case of Mr. Coleman making full confession.

"But His Majesty knows that there is no plot!" Madge ejaculated.

The Duchess threw out her hands. "It's all a game!" she replied. "Have you not gathered that? They play at Life as they play bowls, and act as you act in a game of chess—to produce a result. There is no such thing as truth or untruth. The King sees the humour of it, and he plays the game with the others. The Duke, my husband, is only bewildered and angered—my husband and yours are among the few honest men, but yours entered into the spirit of the game while it was still reputable, and thought to meet wit with wit. Ah, Margaret! 'tis a dangerous thing to make a game of life where the most cunning wits win, and honest men come to grief, be they right or

wrong." The poor lady spoke with intense feeling. She had learnt a bitter lesson in the dedicating of her woman's wit to the cause of the children of light!

Before Madge was able to visit her husband and hear his version of the Committee's visit, London was ringing with yet another new sensation. One Bedloe had given himself up at Bristol with a long and detailed story of the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey in Somerset House, near the Queen's apartments, by three agents of the Jesuit father Gerard and others, all duly implicated on Mr. Bedloe's oath. The new informer possessed a past that rivalled the Arch-informer's own. It seemed that Dr. Titus Oates would have to look to his laurels!

Directly Margaret entered her husband's cell she became aware that something had happened. Pale and haggard he had looked for some time past, for the close confinement was naturally beginning to tell on him, but to-day his face wore a new expression—a stiff, fixed look, and the eyes were bright with pain.

"The Committee, Ned," she asked. "What did they say?"

He smiled grimly. "They conveyed to me His Majesty's most gracious promise of a free pardon if I would confess all—make a full confession!"

He fixed his pain-haunted eyes on his wife. He could not see the humour of the situation—only its intense irony.

"I fear," he said, "that the Bishop of London found me very insolent."

His surmise was correct, as it happened. Mr. Evelyn, in his diary, records that the Bishop of London (the same who had hoped to be made Archbishop of Canterbury for his zeal in persecuting Papists, especially Mr. Coleman) had found Mr. Coleman very insolent and not at all inclined to enlighten them (the Committee.)

At first he seemed disinclined to speak. Then he suddenly started questioning her. "Madge, tell me, what are Catholics saying about me?"

She hesitated, but bit by bit he drew it from her, how

Catholics, the ordinary run of the Catholic population—people who only asked to be left alone, and who didn't stick at a Test or even a Declaration against Papal rights—were exasperated at the secretary's indiscreet action in endeavouring to further the conversion of his countrymen.

"They hold me an idle shallow-pated fellow," Ned said, "who doubtless served his own ends, who was fool enough to think that he was a person of importance—whose very conversion may have had an ulterior motive?"

Madge could not deny it. Even now he had fallen short of the mark.

"I have ruined the Cause," he went on, "and they think I deserve anything I get. Are they all like that?"

"Nay, there are some who still believe in you," Madge stammered.

The hesitancy in her tone gave him the key to the situation. He asked no more questions. It is one thing to have one's enemies denouncing one as an arch-traitor. It is one thing to be execrated as a deep-dyed villain. Such calumny can be stimulating—it has its thrill. Such was the lot of the martyrs, to be execrated by their enemies.

It is another thing to be judged a vain coxcomb—largely a fool, but also a knave in a small, mean way, and that by one's friends. To have a feeling, moreover, that they may be right! These were the dregs of the cup of renunciation that even the martyrs had not been called upon to drink. They had their following! And the King? The King, who might have set him right in the world's eyes? The King had capitulated. The King had thrown him to the wolves. He had invited Mr. Coleman to "tell what he knew of the Plot" and offered him a free pardon!

Edward Coleman sat relieved of the last ounce of worldly impedimenta. For a third time the Lady Poverty had held out her arms to him. First she had offered him San Graal—a mystic cup of happiness, next it had been the Chalice of the Eucharist, holy, austere, magnificent. But now there was no glamour in the vision. The chalice held

out was that of which One had prayed, once on a time, that it might pass from Him—the chalice that was visioned in Gethsemane.

He dropped his head forward on his hands as he sat at the table. In a moment he seemed to see it all. The crime he was charged with. The fate in front of him—the traitor's death. The disgrace. The others dragged in through his folly. He, and not Oates, was the author of the "Popish Plot," and men—his own friends and co-religionists—would say that his cunning and impudence had equalled that of Oates himself.

"Madge," he said. "What do *you* think of it?"

"Oh, Ned, Ned," she moaned. "Whatever made you write those letters? Whatever made you use the Duke's name?"

He was silent. Madge, his own wife, had not guessed the secret of the King's whipping boy. His head dropped again on to his hands, and desolation wrapped his soul in a terrible loneliness. Madge could not watch with him—she could not understand!

She crossed over and gently laid her hand on his shoulder, and kissed the back of his head. He did not look up. She waited. Perhaps in his present mood her words would only worry him? She had better leave him. She could come again in the morning—God would not let her heart break in the night!

Ned sat perfectly still. He was simply suffering—enduring—a violent and exhausting passivity—men have come out of such looking ten years older. He felt the hand still on his shoulder. Now it seemed that Madge had slipped her arm behind his neck. And her other arm seemed to have crept round him and to be holding him up. His whole being relaxed and rested in this new support, and at the same time the weight was lifted from him interiorly. Like a cloud the darkness seemed to lift from his soul. A sudden sweetness had invaded it. He sat up. Madge must be feeling the strain. He looked round. There was no one there. Madge had gone and the door was locked. He sat dazed and wonder-struck. Then

there crept into his mind the words of the antiphon in the Vespers of the Little Office :—" *Laeva ejus sub capite meo, et dextera illius amplexabitur me*—His left hand under my head and His right hand shall encircle me."

At last he had fathomed the secret of the Jesuit preacher from Paray-le-Moniel. He had experienced the human sympathy of the Friend of friends.

PART III

THE VENERABLE EDWARD COLEMAN

CHAPTER I

MARGARET COLEMAN found her husband perfectly recovered when she visited him next day. She took Clare with her. The child had been promised a visit to her father. "Tell her that I am playing at being a hermit in the desert," Ned had suggested, "and then she won't disapprove of my surroundings." As a matter of fact the little lady was frankly disappointed not to find her father with a shorn head and wearing a habit, but the *mis en scène* quite satisfied her. "Your cell is very bare, holy father," she said, "but where are the wild animals that you make tame?"

The hermit laughed. "They come sometimes," he said, "and they are fairly tame."

"Of course they are tame if you are a holy hermit," was the answer. She displayed due interest in the hermit's diet and other things. "But wouldn't you like to play at something else soon," she asked. "This is rather a long game?"

"It won't last much longer, Clare," her father said.

"And what will you play at next?" came the query.

"After this, Clarekin," her father said, "I hope to play the man."

"Perhaps," Clare suggested, "you might be a saint when you have done being a hermit. I would rather you came home for that game, though. I don't think I much care for this place."

Ned was much diverted by his little daughter's visit. He was very happy and boyish that morning. Madge marvelled at the change in him. She felt it to be a mood, and rather dreaded the reaction.

But there was no reaction. As the days went by Margaret Coleman became conscious of this curious

absence of moods in her husband. He maintained a perfectly natural serenity that seemed to underlie all superficial ups and downs. His hope was no longer feverish, nor his courage tinged with cynicism—he even dared to be sad without taking refuge behind an ironical jest.

At one time it almost seemed that the case against Ned must kill itself by its very absurdity. It was characteristic of the mental condition of statesmen, as well as of the populace, that Mr. Coleman's complicity in the Godfrey murder, which had taken place while he was in prison, was seriously discussed, and an order for the examination of the prisoner actually issued, though it was difficult to see how even Mr. Titus Oates could have stood out against such an *alibi*. The latter, inebriated by the good luck which had brought the Coleman letters to his aid, was growing more and more reckless and enterprising. Three days before the date fixed for Mr. Coleman's trial the informer stood up before the House of Commons and surpassed himself—perhaps it would be more accurate to say, overreached himself—with the words, oratorically delivered and phonetically recorded:—“Ai, Taitus Oates accuse Catherine, Queen of England, of Haigh Treason!”

But there were certain things at which Charles drew the line, and one of these was any attack on his much injured consort. He had stood out against the divorce suggested by the episcopal conscience as a way out of the difficulty of succession, and now the informer found that he had over-stepped the limit. Dr. Oates was “placed in confinement” by orders of the King, and fell into momentary disgrace. All this augured well for the other victims of the Plot, which now included the attempted poisoning of the King by her Majesty the Queen, working under the direction of the Jesuits! Margaret Coleman was not without hope as to the result when she entered the Court of the King's Bench on the morning of November the 27th 1678, to see her husband stand on his trial. Counsel had been denied the prisoner, but he had been allowed pen and paper in his cell. An unfortunate banker, named

Staley, had been convicted of High Treason a few days previously on obviously trumped up evidence, so Mr. Coleman's friends had little to expect, such of them, that is, as remained at large, for one of the most appalling features of the direful business was the sinister effect of it on those who were suspected of being friendly with the arch-conspirator. An acquaintance with Margaret Coleman's husband was the most fatal thing that a man could own to at that moment when she sat in the crowded court and watched him take his trial for High Treason.

It has been decided to spare the reader the full report of the "Tryal of Mr. Edward Coleman, Gent. for High Treason" as it appears in the State Papers on account of its unexampled tediousness in the matter of repetition, and the multiplication of adjectives. As it is, the abridged extracts are offered with due apologies. The case was tried before Lord Chief Justice Scroggs and reflects the spirit of the time in a remarkable degree. If the "swimming words" of Mr. Coleman recorded by the historian hardly match the phrases placed in his mouth by the novelist in other parts of the narrative we ask the reader's indulgence, if not his gratitude, bidding him ask himself, after wading through the "Tryal," even in its present abridged form, if he could have been cajoled into perusing an entire volume written strictly in the diction of the period.

The trial of Mr. Coleman took place on the 27th of November, 1678. It opened with all the pomp and circumstance attendant on such occasions. Mr. Edward Coleman was placed at the bar and the Jury sworn in and called to "look upon the prisoner at the bar and harken to his charge." The charge ran thus:—

(You shall understand that the Prisoner stands indicted by the name of Edward Coleman, late of the parish of St Margaret's Westminster in the County of Middlesex, Gent, for that he as a false traitor against our most illustrious, serene, and most excellent King Charles, by the grace of God King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, King defender of the Faith, in that he hath falsely, maliciously and traitorously proposed, compassed,

imagined and intended to stir up and raise Sedition and Rebellion within the Kingdom of England, and to procure and cause a miserable destruction, among the subjects of our said Lord the King, and wholly to deprive, depose, deject, and disinherit our said Lord the King of his Royal State, Title, Power, and Rule of his Kingdom of England, and to bring and put our said Sovereign Lord the King to final Death and destruction, and to overthrow and change the Government of the Kingdom of England and to alter the sincere and true religion of God in the Kingdom by Law Established, and wholly to subvert and destroy the state of the whole Kingdom, being in the universal parts thereof well established and ordained, and to levy war against our said Sovereign Lord the King within his Realm of England; and to accomplish and fulfil these his most wicked treasons and traitorous designs and imaginations aforesaid, the said Edward Coleman afterwards, that is to say the nine-and-twentieth day of September in the seven-and-twentieth year of our King, at the parish of St Margaret's Wesminster, etc, etc, Falsely, Deceitfully, and Traitorously Composed, Contrived and writ two Letters to be sent to one M. Le Chaise, then servant and confessor of Lewis the French King, to desire, procure and obtain for the said Edward Coleman and other false traitors against our Sovereign Lord the King, the aid, assistance, and adherence of the said French King to alter the true religion in this Kingdom established to the superstition of the Church of Rome, and to subvert the Government of this Kingdom of England: And that the said Edward Coleman, in the further prosecution of his Treason and Traitorous imaginings and intentions, on the twenty-ninth day of September, etc, etc, etc, the said several letters from the parish of St Margaret's Westminster, etc, falsely, maliciously, and traitorously did send to the said M. le Chaise in Paris beyond the seas there to be delivered to him: And that the said Edward Coleman afterwards, viz, on the First day of December in the seven-and-twentieth year of our Sovereign Lord the King, at the said parish, etc, did receive from the said M. le Chaise,

one Letter in answer to one of the said Letters first mentioned and written by him, the said Edward Coleman. Which said letter in answer, as aforesaid, falsely, maliciously and Traitorously received the day aforesaid, in the parish, etc, the said Edward Coleman did falsely, traitorously, and maliciously read over and peruse; and that the said Edward Coleman, the Letter so as aforesaid by him in answer to the said Letter received into his custody and possession the day and year last mentioned, at the parish of St Margaret's etc, etc, did falsely, etc, Detain conceal and keep. By which Letter the said M. le Chaise, etc, etc, did signify and promise to the said Edward Coleman, to obtain for the aid of the said Edward Coleman and other false traitors aid, etc, from the said French King, and that Edward Coleman afterwards, viz, the tenth of December, etc, etc, his wicked Treasons and traitorous Designs and Proposals as aforesaid, did tell and declare to one M. Ruvigny, Envoy Extraordinary from the French King, and did falsely, etc, move and excite the said Envoy to partake in his Treasons; and the sooner to fulfil his traitorous Designs, Etc, Etc, the said Edward Coleman afterwards, viz. on the tenth of December, etc, etc, did advisedly, maliciously, deceitfully, etc, compose and write three other letters to be sent to one Sir William Throckmorton, then a subject of our Sovereign Lord the King then residing in France, to solicit the said M. le Chaise to procure and obtain of the French King aid, etc, as aforesaid, and the said Letters last mentioned did falsely and traitorously send and cause to be delivered to the said Sir William Throckmorton in France aforesaid, etc, etc.

Upon this indictment he hath been arraigned and hath pleaded thereunto not guilty; and for his Tryal he puts himself upon God and his Country, which Country you are. Your charge is to prove whether he is guilty of the High Treason whereof he stands indicted or no. If you find him guilty you are to enquire into what goods and chattels, lands and tenements he had at the time that the High Treason was committed, or at any time since. If

you find him not guilty, you are to say so, and no more, and hear your evidence.)

The Recorder here repeated the Indictment, ending :—

To this he (the prisoner) hath pleaded not guilty.

Sergeant Maynard. May it please your Lordship, and you, Gentlemen of the Jury, this is a cause of great concernment. Gentlemen, the Prisoner at the Bar stands there indicted for no less than an intention and endeavour to murder the King! for an endeavour to change the Government of the Nation, so well settled and instituted, and bring us all to the ruin and slaughter of one another, and for an endeavour to alter the Protestant religion and to introduce instead of it the Romish superstition and Popery.

(The Sergeant here reiterated the charges already made and continued):—

In the course of the evidence I shall not open the particulars ; those that we shall have occasion to speak of, and shall in proof mention to you will be these. Le Chaise, the French King's present Confessor, we have mentioned.

We will go on in our evidence. I shall, but more generally, open our method that we mean to take, for it may seem strange and is not reasonably to be imagined, that a private gentleman, as the Prisoner at the Bar is, should have such vast and great designs as this to alter Religion, destroy the Government, aye, and destroy the subjects too, in a great measure. But 'tis not himself alone, but he employs himself for foreign assistance, great Confederacies and Combinations with the subjects of that king, many of whom he did pervert. My Lord, there was Sir William Throckmorton, and some others that are Englishmen too ; there are none of them but what were first Protestants, but when they once renounced their religion, no wonder they should renounce Nation and their Prince too. My Lord there is likewise a Consult of Jesuits used, too, where in express words they designed to murder the King, or contrived and advised upon it.

My Lord, there were four Irishmen (I open but the

heads of things) sent to Windsor to murder the King : This gentleman received and disbursed money about this business, and one Ashby, a Jesuit, had instructions from him to prosecute the design, and to treat with a physician to poison the King. This the Prisoner approved of and contributed to it. Mr. Oates was the first man that we hear of that discovered this Treason ; he was the single man that discovered so many agents in so great a Treason as this was, and it needed to be well seconded, but he being found to be but single, the boldness and courage of these complotters in it grew great thereupon. We know what followed ; the damnable murder of that gentleman, (Sir E. Godfrey) in execution of his office so hellishly contrived, and the endeavours that were used to hide it, everybody knows. How many stories were told to hide that abominable murder, how many lies there were about it, but it could not be suppressed. The Nation is waked out of sleep, and it concerns us now to look about us. But all this while Mr. Coleman thought himself safe, walked in the fields, goes abroad. Jealousy increasing and himself still secure.

The Letters that are produced go but to some part of the year 75 ; from 75 to 78 all lies in the dark, we have no certain proof of it ; but we apprehend that we had intelligence until 78 ; that there were the same persons continuing here, and his company increasing here. But this I speak but as probable (but very exceeding probable) that there were other passages of intelligence between this person and other confederates. It seems, My Lord, that this Coleman was aware that he was concerned, but God blinded and infatuated him, and took away his reason. It's no question but that he carried away some of those papers. Those that were left behind and are produced he forgot and neglected ; and by that, My Lord, those that are produced are evidence against him at this time. Surely he thought that we were in such a condition that had eyes and could not see, and ears that could not hear, and understandings without understanding, for he was bold and walked abroad, and that until this prosecution

was made upon him, he endeavoured to murder the King, change the Government, make an alteration in Religion, and destruction of Protestants as well as of the Protestant Religion. It will be proved by some letters when they were rejected by the Duke that he sent them in the Duke's name, and by this no man will doubt but that he is a great traitor.

CHAPTER II

The Attorney-General: May it please your Lordship and you gentlemen of the Jury. The King's Sergeant hath opened the general parts of our evidence, and we have reason to see that our evidence will be very long, therefore I shall spend no more time in opening it than just necessary. And indeed, Mr. Coleman himself hath saved me much of the labour which otherwise I should have bestowed, for he hath left such elegant and copious narratives of the whole design under his own hand, that the reading of them will be better than any new one that I could make. But, My Lord, some short account I will give you. My Lord, it will appear that there hath been for many years past a more than ordinary design and industry to bring in the Popish and extirpate the Protestant religion. I doubt not but that this design in some measure hath been contriving since the Reformation, by the Jesuits, or some of their emmissaries, but hath often received interruption, for that they have proceeded sometimes more coldly, sometimes more hotly ; and I do think at no time since the Reformation that ever this Design was carried on with greater industry, nor with fairer hopes of success, than for these last years, My Lord, you will hear from our witnesses that the first onset which was to be made upon us was by the whole troop of Jesuits and priests who were sent hither from the seminaries abroad where they had been trained up in all the subtlety and skill that was fit to work upon the people. My Lord, you will hear how active they have been, and what insinuations they used for the perverting of particular persons. After some time spent in such attempts, they quickly grew weary of that course, for though they got some proselytes they were but few. They at least resolved to take a more

expeditious way as they could not prevail by the former. And I wish with all my heart that the bodies of Protestants may be as much out of danger as their understandings will be by the force of their arguments. But, My Lord, when this way would not take they began then to consider they must throw at all at once. No doubt but they would have been glad if the people of England had had but one neck, but they knew that the people of England had but one Head, and therefore they were resolved to strike at that.

My Lord, you will find that there was a summons of the principal Jesuits of the most able head-pieces who were to meet in April or May last to consult of very great things of a most diabolical nature, no less than to take away the life of the King our Sovereign.

My Lord, you will find as is usually practised in such horrid conspiracies, to make all secure that there was an Oath of Secrecy taken and that upon the Sacrament. You will find agreements made that this most wicked and horrible Design should be attempted. You will find two villains were found among them who undertook to do this execrable work ; and you will hear of the rewards that they were to have. Money in case they did succeed and masses in case they perished, so that their bodies were provided for in case they survived and their souls if they died. My Lord, what was the reason that they did not effect their design but either that these villains wanted opportunity, or their hearts failed them when they came to put into execution this wicked Design, or perhaps (which is most probable) it was the Providence of God which over-ruled them that this bloody Design did not take effect. But these gentlemen were not content with one essay, they quickly thought of another, and there were four Irishmen prepared (men of very mean fortunes and desperate conditions) and they were to make an attempt no longer since than when the King was at Windsor.

My Lord, I perceive by proofs that these assassins went down thither, but it came to pass for some of the reasons aforesaid that the attempt failed likewise. My

Lord, these gentlemen, those wise heads who had met here in consultation, did then, and long before, consider with themselves that so great a cause as this was not to be put upon the hazard of a few hands, they therefore prepared Forces, Aids and Assistances both at home and abroad to second this wicked design. And here we must needs to confess as to the former part of this Plot, I mean the attempt on the King's person, Mr. Coleman was not the contriver, nor to be the executioner ; but yet your Lordship knows, in all Treasons there is no accessory, every man is a principal.

This much have we against him, even as to this part of the Design, which will involve him in the whole guilt of it, that Mr. Coleman consented to it, though his hand was not in it. Mr. Coleman encouraged a Messenger to carry money down as a reward to Windsor, as a reward of those murtherers. Of this we have proof against him which is sufficient. My Lord, Mr. Coleman, as a man of greater abilities, is reserved for greater employments, and such wherein, I confess, all his abilities were little enough. There were negotiations to be made with men abroad, money to be produced, partly from men at home here, and partly abroad from those that wished them well. And in all these negotiations Mr. Coleman had a mighty hand, and you will perceive by and by what a great progress he made with them.

This conspiracy went so far, as you will hear, that there were general officers named and appointed that should command their new Catholic Army, and many were engaged, if not listed. They were not only in England, but in Ireland likewise, where arms and other necessaries were provided, and whither great sums of money were returned to serve on occasion. But one thing there is, my Lord, which comes nearest Mr. Coleman. As there were military officers named, so likewise the great Civil Places and Offices of the Kingdom were to be disposed of. I will not name to whom at this time. This gentleman, such were his great abilities and the trust and alliance that his Party had on him, that no less an office than that of Principal

Secretary of State should serve his turn, and he had a commission that came from the superiors of the Jesuits to enable him to execute that great office.

My Lord, it seems strange that so great an office should be conferred by no greater man than the Principal of the Jesuits, but if the Pope can depose Kings no wonder if the Superior of the Jesuits can, by a power delegated from him, make secretaries. It is not certain what the date of this commission was, but, I believe that he was so very earnest and forward in this Plot that he began to execute his office long before he had his commission for it, for I find by his Letters, which are of a more early date, that he had proceeded so far as to treat with Father Ferrier, who was the French King's confessor, before he had actually received this commission.

You will understand by the Letters, which we shall produce, what he had to do with him and the other Confessor, who succeeded Father le Chaise. There were two small matters they treated of, no less than the dissolution of Parliament, and the Extirpation of the Protestant religion. It is very remarkable, and shows the vanity of the man, that he had such an opinion of the success of these negotiations that he had penned a Declaration, writ with his own hand, to be published in print upon the dissolution of Parliament to justify this action with many specious and plausible reasons. So he takes upon him to write a Declaration in the name of the King. So he prepares a letter also in the name of the Duke; I would not affirm unless I could prove it by his own confession that he had no manner of authority from the Duke to prepare such a letter. By this you will perceive the forwardness of this man. My Lord, you will perceive that Mr. Coleman thought himself above all, and such was his overweening opinion of his wit and policy that he thought himself the sole and supreme director of all the affairs of the Catholics. So he had a little too much eye on the reward, he looked too much asquint on the matter of money. His great endeavours were not so much out of conscience, or out of zeal for his religion, as out of temporal interest; to him

gain was instead of Godliness, and by his Letters it will be proved that he got much money. We are not able to prove the continuance of his correspondence so as to make it clearly out, but we suppose that it continued until the day that he was seized. Then you might say that he might have burnt them all for many would burn as well as a few, but then he had lost much of the honour of a great Statesman, many a fine sentence, and many a deep intrigue had been lost to all posterity. I believe that we owe this discovery to something of Mr. Coleman's vanity. He would not lose the glory of managing these important negotiations about so great a Design. If this was not his reason, I believe that God took away from him that clearness of judgment and strength of memory that he had on other occasions. My Lord, I shall no longer detain you from reading the papers themselves for Mr. Coleman hath, with his own hand, recorded this conspiracy. Our evidence consisteth of two parts; one is witness *viva voce*, which we desire, with the favour of the Court, to begin with, and when that is done, we shall read the several Letters or negotiations in writing, and so submit the whole to your Lordship's direction.

Prisoner: I beg leave that a poor ignorant man that is so heavily charged, that it seems a little unequal to consider the reason why a prisoner, in such a case as this, is not allowed Counsel, but your Lordship is supposed to be Counsel for him. But I think it very hard that I cannot be admitted Counsel, and I humbly hope that your Lordship will not suffer me to be lost by things that myself cannot answer. I deny the conclusion, but the premises are too strong and artificial.

L. C. Justice: You cannot deny the premises, but that you have done these things.

Prisoner: I can, safely and honestly.

L. C. Justice: You would make a better Secretary of State than a logician, for they never deny the conclusion.

Prisoner: I grant it, your Lordship. You see the advantage great men have of me, I do not pretend to logic.

L. C. Justice: The labour lies upon their hands; the

proof belongs for them to make out these intrigues of yours, therefore you need not have Counsel, because the proof must be plain upon you, and then it will be vain to deny the conclusion.

Prisoner: I hope, my Lord, if there be any point of Law that I am not skilled in that your Lordship will be pleased not to take the advantage over me. Another thing seems most dreadful, that is the violent prejudices that seem against every man in England that is confessed to be a Roman Catholic. It is possible that a Roman Catholic may be very innocent of these crimes. If one of these innocent Roman Catholics should come to this Bar he lies under such disadvantages already, and his prejudices so greatly biasseth human nature, that unless your Lordship will lean extremely much on the other side Justice will hardly stand upright, and lie upon a level. But to satisfy your Lordship I do not think it any service to destroy any of the King's subjects unless it be in a very plain case.

L. C. Justice: You need not make any preparation for us in this matter. You shall have a fair, just, and legal trial. If condemned, it will be apparent that you ought to be so, and without a fair proof there shall be no condemnation. Therefore you shall find that we will not do to you as you do to us, blow up at adventure, kill people because they are not of your persuasion. Our religion teacheth us another doctrine, and you shall find it clearly to your advantage. We seek no man's blood, but our own safety. But you are brought to us for the necessity of things which your own selves have made, and from your own actions you shall be condemned or acquitted.

Prisoner: It is supposed upon evidence that the examinations that have been of me in prison are like to be evidence against me now. I have nothing to say against it, but give me leave to say at the time that when I was in prison I was upon my ingenuity charged. I promised I would confess all I knew, and I only say this that what I said in prison is true, and I am ready to swear and evidence that that is all the truth.

L. C. Justice: It is all true that you say, but did you tell all that was true?

Prisoner: I know no more than what I declared to the two Houses.

L. C. Justice: Mr. Coleman, I'll tell you when you will be apt to gain credit in this matter. You say that you told all things that you knew, the truth and the whole truth. Can mankind be persuaded that you that had this negotiation in 74 and 75 left off just then at that time when your letters were found according to their dates? Do you believe there was no negotiation after 75 because we have not found them? Have you spoken one word to that? Have you confessed or produced those papers and weekly intelligence? When you answer that you may have credit, without that it is impossible, for I cannot give credit to one word you say unless you give an account of the subsequent negotiation.

Prisoner: After that time, as I said to the Lords, I did give over corresponding. I did offer to take all oaths and tests in the world that I never had one letter for at least two years; yea, that I may keep myself within compass, but I think it was for three or four. Now I have acknowledged to the House of Commons I have had a cursory correspondence which I never regarded or valued, but as the letters came I burnt them, or made use of them as common paper. I say that for the general correspondence I have had for two years. They have had every one of the letters that I knew of.

Attorney Gen.: Whether you had or no you shall have the fairest trial that can be, and we cannot blame the gentleman for he is used to greater affairs than these matters or forms of Law. But, My Lord, I desire to go into the evidence and when that is done he shall be heard as long as he pleadeth without any interruption if he desires it. Before I give my evidence let him have pen and ink and paper, with your Lordship's leave.

L. C. Justice: Help him to pen, ink, and paper.

CHAPTER III

SPACE forbids us giving a verbatim report of the cross examination of Mr. Titus Oates. The witness received an admonition from the Lord Chief Justice to speak the truth and the whole truth, "for," His Lordship remarked, "there is no reason in the world that you should add one thing that is false. I would not have one tittle added for any advantage or consequences that may fall," he saw fit to add, "when a man's life and blood lieth at stake. Let him be condemned by Truth. You have taken an oath, and you being a minister know the great regard that you ought to have for the sacredness of an oath, and that to take a man's life by way of a false oath is murther." The admonition ended with the due warning that the prisoner must be condemned by plain evidence of fact.

Thus admonished, the witness proceeded to embark on a narrative which, while doing ample credit to his imagination, has unfortunately been proved beyond dispute to have been a tissue of lies, of the most circumstantial character. Detail was perhaps Mr. Oates' master-touch. Thus he repeated the sayings of Mr. Coleman in his own words. He gave the contents of letters from the prisoner, some of which were writ in Latin, some in plain English. He gave artistic colouring to his narrative by introducing the names of certain Jesuits, and little trivial episodes in his intercourse with the would-be murderers of his Majesty. His use of such facts as he possessed knowledge of was admirably artistic. There can be no question but that Titus Oates was an artist, though he suffered for his Art afterwards at the whipping-post and in the pillory. His

allusion to Mr. Coleman's kinsman at St. Omer's was a delicate touch that lent a convincingness to his narrative.

It was to be regretted that there was only one person in the Court, to wit, the prisoner, who could fully appreciate the agility with which the witness got himself out of a tight corner, which occurred now and again, for his cross-examiner did not lack in shrewdness. From the ordinary listener the genius of the informer was hidden. He simply heard a straightforward and artless narrative, containing perhaps too many irrelevant details, but absorbingly interesting on account of the lurid disclosures that it contained. The witness gave a detailed account of the Jesuit Consult that was held in the White Horse Tavern in the Strand, and afterwards on several occasions in the lodgings of Father Ireland and others. At these Consults it was arranged that Pickering and Groves, two lay brothers, should assassinate the King's person by shooting or other means. Groves was to have fifteen hundred pounds. Pickering, being a religious man, was to have thirty thousand Masses, which at twelve-pence a mass amounted to that money. This resolve was communicated to Mr. Coleman in Mr. Oates' presence, and in several letters did he mention it, and in one he desired that the Duke might be trapped into the Plot to murder the King. This letter was written to one Ireland, and Mr. Oates, the confidant of the most dangerous and intimate secrets of the chosen few, saw it himself and read it.

The gentlemen of the Jury were called upon to hear what the witness stated when he affirmed that Mr. Coleman, speaking at Wild House (of course Mr. Oates was there to hear him) had said that he considered the design to murder the King "well contrived." Mr. Coleman was also very active in raising the rebellion in Ireland, and was anxious to send Father Fogarty, an Irish ruffian, over to despatch the Duke of Ormonde by poison. He had sent a sum of £200,000 to Ireland for the purpose of the Rebellion. He had also pursued Father Harcourt from his house in Duke Street to Wild House (the witness's details were sometimes almost tedious) to safeguard the movements of four gentle-

men who had been despatched to Windsor to kill the King.

Mr. Coleman had eighty pounds in guineas for these, and he also gave the messenger a guinea to expedite his journey.

But Mr. Coleman's activities did not end there. In July he conferred with one Ashby, the Rector of St. Omer's, to expedite the King by poison, suppose the other means failed. He proposed to Sir George Wakeman to poison the King. A sum of ten thousand pounds had been suggested for this purpose, but Mr. Oates (still present at the counsels of rectors and Provincials—at times it would seem that he had even spoiled a *tête-à-tête*!) heard Mr. Coleman say that he considered this too little, and propose that another five thousand should be added.

The witness told the Court how he had seen the Commission from the General of the Society of Jesus, Father Oliva, making Mr. Coleman Principal Secretary of State, at the Chambers of Mr. Langhorne. He gave the Court quite a long story of how he came to be acquainted with Mr. Langhorne, the Catholic lawyer; after which the Attorney-General gave the prisoner permission to ask any questions that he might be minded to. The prisoner answered:—

“I am mighty glad to see that gentleman Sir Thomas Dolman in Court for I think he was upon my examination before the Council, and this man that gives now in evidence against me there told the King that he never saw me before; and he is extremely well acquainted with me now, and hath a world of intimacy. Mr. Oates at that time gave such an account of my concern in this matter that I had orders to go to Newgate. I never saw Mr. Oates since I was born but at that time.”

Mr. Oates's answer was characteristic:—

“My Lord, when Mr. Coleman was upon his examination before the Council Board he saith I said that I never saw him before in my life. I then said that I would not swear that I had not seen him before in my life, because my sight was bad by candle-light, and candle-light alters the sight

much, but when I heard him speak I could have sworn it was he, but it was not then my business."

The Lord Chief Justice then was moved to point out that the stress of the objection lay not so much on the question of seeing, but in how it came that the witness had laid no more to Mr. Coleman's charge.

To this Mr. Oates replied, "My Lord, I was not bound to give more than a general information against Mr. Coleman, and then I was so weak, being up two nights, and having been taking prisoners, upon my salvation, I could scarce stand on my legs."

Mr. Oates became pathetic about his health when pressed for details as to the evidence that he had given on the former occasion. He had been so weak that he had been bidden to retire by the King. He had not apprehended that the Council was ready almost to let Mr. Coleman go at large or he would have given further account.

At this point the saviour of the Nation was rather badly run in as to dates, and the time elapsing between Mr. Coleman's first examination and these further statements as to the extent of his guilt. How came it that, Mr. Coleman being so desperate a man, Mr. Oates had omitted to give the information on two occasions before the Council?

"I spoke little of persons till the persons came face to face," Mr. Oates replied. "And for want of memory, being disturbed and wearied in sitting up two nights, I could not give that good account of Mr. Coleman that I did afterwards when I consulted my papers, and when I saw Mr. Coleman was secured I had no need to give a further account."

Still further heckled on the subject of the non-recognition of the prisoner, Mr. Oates again had resort to the candle-light, also to the fact that the prisoner's periwig had proved a disguise on several occasions. He meandered off artlessly on to the subject of Mr. Coleman's kinsman at St. Omer's, to whose existence the prisoner had confessed, but the Judge pulled him up.

"Mr. Oates," he said, "answer this question in short,

and without confounding it with length. Were you demanded (by the Council) if you knew Mr. Coleman?"

"Not to my knowledge," the Witness replied.

The prisoner then appealed to Sir Thomas Dolman who had been present at the Council Table to substantiate his statement.

Sir Thomas Dolman gave his evidence to the effect that the witness had declared that he did not know the prisoner—not merely that he did not know him well, or was uncertain in the candle-light—and he had made this statement after he had heard the prisoner speak.

"He said, to the best of my remembrance," Sir Thomas said, "that he had no acquaintance with the man."

It was really awkward for the witness, and also for the Court. To shake Mr. Titus's Oates's credit was to drag the very foundations away from the charge. The Lord Chief Justice called upon Sir Robert Southwell, who had also been present at the Council Table.

Sir Robert found the question too particular for him to be able to give the Court satisfaction, but he pointed out that certain material things were then said by Mr. Oates, which had not been mentioned. For instance, Mr. Oates had declared against Sir George Wakeman that he had received fifteen thousand pounds, and that Mr. Coleman had paid in five of the fifteen.

The Court seized on this piece of evidence with alacrity. The prisoner's contention that Mr. Oates had failed to charge him with the heinous crime afterwards brought up against him, was thus satisfactorily answered. In vain the prisoner pointed out that the Council had found the charge against him so slight that they had all but discharged him. Sir Robert Southwell was out to support the witness for the prosecution. He declared that Mr. Oates had said of Mr. Coleman that he had corresponded very wickedly with the French King's Confessor, and that he did believe that if his papers were searched there would be found in them that which would cost him his neck. Public confidence in Mr. Oates as a witness was re-established, thanks to Sir Robert Southwell's tact.

The evidence of Mr. Titus Oates was followed by that of Mr. Bedloe, a gentleman of like gifts and similar reputation.

Mr. Bedloe testified to carrying packets of letters from Mr. Coleman to the Père la Chaise having reference to a Plot. The present witness had suppressed the fact that he knew French, and thus got at the contents of the treasonable letters entrusted to him. He had been promised a reward from the Pope, both here and in the world to come. He had gone to Mr. Coleman's house and heard the latter say that if he had a hundred lives and a sea of blood to carry on the Cause he would spend it all, and if there were a hundred heretical kings to be deposed he would see them all destroyed. This took place in Mr. Coleman's house in the room at the foot of the staircase. Here the prisoner asked Mr. Bedloe "Did I ever see you in my life?"

"You may well ask that question," was the reply. "In the Stone Gallery at Somerset House when you came from a Consult where there were great persons that could make the bottom of your Plot tremble. You saw me then!"

Evidence was next given as to the seizing of Mr. Coleman's papers. A large letter was produced. It had not been found among the principal papers, but among those which had been discovered in an old deal box with the lid roughly nailed on. The letter was Mr. Coleman's by his own confession, and the witness of his servant and secretary.

This letter had been overlooked in the first scrutiny of the prisoner's papers. It was only when, days later, another examination was made in case something might have got overlooked that the letter which the Clerk of the Crown now proceeded to read came to light.

It is not our intention to give the reader Mr. Coleman's long and very tedious letter in extenso. Such an infliction would be unpardonable. It deals with the politics of the moment, points out very adroitly how a dissolution of Parliament would go towards securing Peace between France and England, and how the French King's purse-strings might be unloosed to facilitate that end. It gives a complete history of the Crown Policy during the

preceding three years, and dwells on the hardships endured by the Catholics of England which would be removed by the election of a Parliament which would grant liberty of conscience to all. The two great projects named in the letter are, (1) "to put the Parliament upon making it their humble request to His Majesty that the Fleet may be put into the Duke of York's care," and (2) "to get an Act of general liberty of conscience."

The French Confessor's answer to the long letter was next read aloud to the Court. A copy of it had been found in Mr. Coleman's canvas bag. In it the French priest made polite acknowledgment of the long letter, which with true French politeness, he protested he had not found tedious (as our readers most undoubtedly would have done.) The writer gave the assurance that he would not fail in his good will to the other's master. After this the Clerk of the Crown read aloud the Declaration drawn up by Mr. Coleman, giving reasons for the dissolution of Parliament. This was written in the King's name and spoke in high terms of the Established Church. The language was pompous, and interlarded with piety. The King's tongue must needs have been very far in his cheek before he could have compiled such an effusion as this written in his name!

The Attorney General then went on to prove how Mr. Coleman was not only so bold as to prepare a Declaration in the King's name, but also out of his further ingenuity he prepares a letter contrary to the Duke's knowledge, which when he was so bold as to show it to the Duke the Duke was very angry and rejected it.

A copy of this letter was then produced and read. It had an allusion to "Coleman, one of my family in whom I have great confidence." (One may imagine that there was laughter in the Court.)

The Attorney-General, however, had kept his piece of master-evidence to the end. "My Lord," he said, "I have but one paper more to read and I have kept it till the last, because if we had proved nothing by witness, or not read anything but this, this one letter is sufficient to

maintain the charge against him (the prisoner) There are some clauses in it that speak better than I can. He hath confessed and owned it to be in his hand-writing. I desire that the letter be read."

The Clerk of the Crown then read the letter. After certain ominous allusions to a cipher, and to writing, for yet greater security, in lemon juice on special occasions, the writer burst out into the following :—

WE HAVE HERE A MIGHTY WORK UPON OUR HANDS, NO LESS THAN THE CONVERSION OF THREE KINGDOMS, AND BY THAT PERHAPS THE UTTER SUBDUING OF A PESTILENT HERESY WHICH HAS DOMINEERED OVER GREAT PART OF THIS NORTHERN WORLD A LONG TIME. THERE WAS NEVER SUCH HOPE OF SUCCESS SINCE THE DEATH OF OUR QUEEN MARY.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER the reading of the letters the Tryal of Mr. Coleman was continued in this wise.

Attorney Gen.: I have done with my evidence. We need no more proof against him.

Prisoner: My Lord, I would, if your Lordship please, very fain ask of Mr. Oates, because he was pleased to say he was present with me in May or April, whether he knows the particular days of the month. (Here Mr. Oates, who had retired to rest himself, was called and interrogated by the prisoner as to the Consult held in May and approximated the date, distinguishing carefully between old and new style. He could not, however, charge his memory with the exact date of the Consult held in August at the Savoy.)

Prisoner: I would know the day (of the Consult) in August.

Oates: I believe, I will not be positive in it, it was about the 21st of August.

Justice Wild: Was it in old style?

Oates: Yes.

Prisoner: I can prove I was in Warwickshire at that time. I can make it appear I was fourscore miles off.

Lord Chief-J: You will do well to prove you were there when the guiney was given. You may say as you will, but Mr. Oares doth charge that expressly in August, according to the English style, you were at this Wild House, and that he saw four score pounds prepared. You, Mr. Coleman, asked the question what preparations were made for the men to go to Windsor, and yourself gave a guiney for the expedition. It is a hard matter to press a man to tell the precise day of the month, but positively he doth say it was in August.

Prisoner: I was two-and-twenty or three-and-twenty days in August in Warwickshire.

L. C. J.: What have you now more to say?

Prisoner: My Lord, I never saw Mr. Oates but in the Council Chamber, I never saw him in Rome, in other parts I never saw the face of him in my whole life, nor did I see the other (Bedloe) till now in Court, as I hope to be saved. And then, My Lord, as to their testimony neither of them swear to the self-same fact.

L. C. J.: No man shall be guilty if denial shall make him innocent. They swear to the fact of killing the King, and that is enough. If one saith you have a Plot to poison, that is killing the King, and if another swears a Plot to shoot or stab, that is killing the King also; then there is your own undertaking in your letter under your own hand.

Prisoner: For treason, with submission to your Lordship, I hope there's none in that, though there are very extravagant expressions in it, I hope some expressions explain it that it was not my design to kill the King.

L. C. J.: No, your design was to convert three kingdoms and subdue that heresy that had reigned so long over Northern parts. And there never was more hopes for the success thereof since our Queen Mary's time till now. You are charged with having a correspondence with foreign powers, etc., etc.

Prisoner: Consider the contexture and connection of things, whether the whole be not to make (as far as lay in my power) the King and the Duke as great as could be?

L. C. J.: How well or ill you execute the fault that's not the question. They relate to the Duke, most of them, little to the King. You were carrying on such a design as you intended to put the Duke at the head of in such methods and ways as the Duke himself would not approve of but rejected.

Prisoner: Do not think I would throw anything on the Duke, though I might possibly in the beginning make use of the Duke's name, it is possible—they say I did, but can any imagine that the people will lay down money £200,000, with me upon the Duke's name and not know

whether the Duke be in it, and consequently nobody will imagine the Duke would ever employ any sum to the king's prejudice or disservice while he lived. I take it for granted that the Law was ever made immediately subject to the King or Duke, and consequently to the Duke, I cannot think this will ever be expounded by the Law of England, or the Jury, to be Treason.

L. C. J.: What a kind of way is this? You have such a swimming way of melting words that it is a troublesome thing for a man to collect matter out of them. You gave yourself up to be a great negotiator in the altering of kingdoms. The Thing your letter do seem to import is this, that your design was to bring in Popery, and to promote the interest of the French King, for which you hoped to have a pension. The Duke's name is often mentioned, that's true, sometimes it appears it is against his will, and sometimes he might know of it. Now you say these sums of money, and all that was done, did relate to the interests of the King or Duke. How can this advance them unless it were done to do them service, and if they do not consent to it? "And how can this be Treason?" What kind of stuff is this? You do seem to be a mighty agent, might you not for a colour use the Duke's name to drive on the Catholic cause which you were driven to by the priests mightily, and think to get £200,000 advance money and a pension for yourself, and make yourself somebody for the present, and Secretary of State for the future? If you will make any defence for yourself call witnesses. Say what you can, these vain inconsequential discourses signify nothing.

Prisoner: I have a witness to prove I was in Warwickshire.

L. C. J.: (to Boatman, a witness) Where was Mr. Coleman in August last?

Boatman: In Warwickshire.

L. C. J.: How long?

Boatman: All August, to the best of my remembrance.

L. C. J.: Can you say that he was in Warwickshire all August? That he was not in London?

Boatman : I am not certain what time of the month he was in London.

L. C. J. : That he was in Warwickshire in August may be very true. I do not ask how long he was there but was he no where else? (to which the witness could make no positive answer.)

Prisoner : I was at Lord Denbigh's and Mr. Fisher's. I was there at least twenty days.

L. C. J. : Have you any more witnesses?

Prisoner : None.

L. C. J. : If you have a mind to say anything more, say what you can.

Prisoner : I can say nothing more than I have said. Positively I say, and upon my salvation I never saw these witnesses Oates but once, and Bedloe never before.

His Majesty's Solicitor-General summed up the evidence, at the conclusion of which the prisoner again denied Mr. Oates's testimony and offered to prove his absence from London in the month of August from a book of day expenses lying at his lodging in Vere Street, Covent Garden. To this the Lord Chief Justice replied :—

“If the cause did turn upon that matter I would be well content to sit until the book was brought, but I doubt the cause will not stand upon that foot, but if that were the case it would do you little good. Observe what I say to the Jury.”

In his summing-up the Lord Chief Justice pointed out that the accusation was in two sorts, the one, to subvert the Protestant religion and to introduce Popery, and the other to destroy and kill the king. The evidence was likewise of two sorts. The one by letters in the prisoner's own hand, and the other by witnesses *vive voce*. The former he seemed to confess, the latter totally to deny. What was plainly intended by the letters was to bring in the Roman Catholic religion, that which was by consequence intended was the killing of the King as being the most likely means to introduce that which, 'twas apparent by his letters, was designed to be brought in. Mr. Coleman knew it was not fit for him to own to the

introducing of his religion by the murder of the King, or by a foreign force, the one was too black, and the other too bloody to be owned, therefore he tells us that it was to be done by the dissolving of Parliament and by toleration of religion. Was this not a very fine and artificial covering for his design for the subversion of religion? Was it likely that the French King would be cozened out of his money except by assurances that the design would be accomplished, and how was such a design to be accomplished except by murder and bloodshed? The speaker here entered into a disquisition on Popery, pointing out how the Prisoner's natural instinct, or rather the instincts incalculated by the priests who had dominion over men's consciences and power over their purses, would lead him to take away the lives of men who differed from him, it being obvious that the establishment of liberty of conscience would not lead to the restoration of Popery which made men slaves in their understandings, nor a new Parliament favour Popery, which could but appeal to the witless. These therefore were the counterfeit pretensions of Mr. Coleman.

Having thus represented Popery as a state of blind ignorance, begotten by the proscribing of all books and unlicensed by the priesthood, the Speaker drew the plain inference (yet with some little skill) that for the prisoner to have departed from the Protestant Religion in which he had been bred, his father having been a minister in Suffolk, for such a creed was in itself evidence against him to prove the indictment, for no man of understanding except for by-ends could have left his religion to become a Papist. In the case of Mr. Coleman, a man of reason and subtlety, it could not have been conscience that had led him to take the step. His pension was his conscience, and his Secretary's place the bait. The Lord Chief Justice then entered upon a discourse on conscience, touching incidentally on the late King's ability to defend the Protestant religion against all the cardinals at Rome, and reminded the Court of its reverence to the late Defender of the Faith, hinting at the disloyalty as well as

the spiritual arrogance of those who departed from the judgment of the martyr-king. He ended his summing up of the case before the jury with these salient observations.

"I do acknowledge that many of the Popish priests formerly were men of learning, and may still be beyond the seas, but I could never yet meet with any here that had other learning and ability, but artificial only to delude weak women and weaker men. They have, indeed, ways of conversion by enlightening our understandings with a faggot, and by the powerful and irresistible arguments of a dagger, but there are such wicked solecisms in their religion that they seem to have left them neither natural sense, by their absurdity in so unreasonable a belief as of the wine turned to blood, nor natural conscience by their cruelty who make the Protestants' blood as wine, and these priests thirst after it.

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum?"

"Our execution shall be as quick as their gunpowder but more effectual. And so, gentlemen, I shall leave you to consider what Mr. Coleman's letters prove him guilty of directly; and what by consequence, and whether you think his fiery zeal had so cold blood in it as to spare others?"

"He speaks of rooting out our religion and our Party, and he is right, for they can never root out the Protestant religion but they must kill the Protestants. For the other part of the evidence, which is by testimony of the present witnesses, you have heard them—I will not detain you any longer now, the day is going out."

(The Jury, admonished to take full time and make no haste, went from the Bar, and returned).

Court: Are you agreed of your verdict?

Jury: Yes.

Court: Edward Coleman, hold up thy hand.

Is Edward Coleman guilty of High Treason, whereof he stands indicted, or not guilty?

Jury: Guilty, my Lord.

Prisoner: You were pleased to say to the Jury that they must either bring me in guilty, or two persons perjured. I

am a dying man, and upon my death, and expectation of salvation, declare that I never saw these two gentlemen, excepting Mr. Oates, but once in my life, and that was at the Council-Table.

L. C. J. : Mr. Coleman, your papers are enough to condemn you.

Court : Capt. Richardson, you must bring Mr. Coleman hither to-morrow morning to receive his sentence.

CHAPTER V.

ON the following day, being November the 28th, Mr. Coleman was brought to the Bar to receive his sentence.

The prisoner informed the Court that his man was present in the Hall, having a book that would make it appear that he was out of town at the time that Mr. Oates testified to seeing him, but the evidence was not taken.

The Lord Chief Justice then gave judgment on the prisoner, summing up his crime of attempting to subvert the Protestant religion by the assistance of a foreign Power as Treason in itself, though it were not actually contrived by the death of the King. The verdict, having been secured, his Lordship laid little or no stress on the *vive voce* evidence. As he had said, Mr. Coleman's own papers had condemned him. The modification in the thesis was somewhat remarkable.

"If any man shall endeavour to subvert our religion," his Lordship said, "though he did not actually contrive it by the death of the King, or of any one man, yet whatsoever follows on that contrivance he is guilty of. Though you meant only to bring your religion in by dissolving of Parliaments, or by liberty of conscience, and such kind of innocent ways, yet, if so be those means should not prove effectual and worse be used (though by others of your confederates) as we have reason to believe there would, you are guilty of that blood that would have followed." Thus his Lordship made it clear (after the Jury had delivered their verdict, be it marked), that Mr. Coleman had been condemned out of his own mouth, and independently of the witness's whose evidence he persistently challenged. He concluded his judgment with a short discourse on contrition, and the errors of the Church of Rome in regard to that and other doctrines, "many that hardly the religion

of a Turk would own." He exhorted Mr. Coleman to make a public confession, which would do him more good than all his auricular confessions. "As I think in your Church you allow of a thing called attrition," said he, "if you cannot with your Church have contrition, which is a sorrow proceeding from love, pray make use of attrition, which is a sorrow proceeding from fear."

He finally bade the prisoner not be deluded with any fond hopes of a respite since the King, who was full of mercy to a fault, if he were inclined that way, could do nothing. In such a time of disorder and outrage, both Houses would interpose between the King and such an act.

"In which having discharged my conscience to you as a Christian," his Lordship concluded, "I will now proceed to pronounce sentence upon you, and do my duty as a judge.

"You shall return to prison, from thence to be drawn to the place of execution, where you shall be hanged by the neck and be cut down alive, your bowels burnt before your face, and your quarters severed, and your body disposed of as the King thinks fit, and so the Lord have mercy on your soul."

Mr. Coleman made answer :—

"My Lord, I do humbly thank your Lordship, and I do admire your charity that you would be pleased to give me this admirable counsel, and I will follow it as well as I can, and I beg your Lordship hear me what I am going to say. Your Lordship, most Christian-like, hath observed wisely that Confession is most extremely necessary to a dying man, and I do think so too ; but that confession which I suppose your Lordship means is of a guilty, evil conscience in any of these points that I am condemned for. If I thought I had any such guilt I should assuredly think myself damned, now that I am going out of the world, by concealing them, in spite of all pardons and indulgences, or any act that the Pope or the Church of Rome could do for me, as I believe any one article of faith. Therefore I pray hear the words of a dying man. I have made a resolution, I thank God, not to tell a lie, no, not a single lie,

not to save my life. I hope God will not so far leave me as to let me do it ; and I do renounce all manner of mercy that God may show me if I have not told the House of Commons all that I know in my whole heart towards this business ; and I never in all my life made any proposition, nor received any proposition, nor knew nor heard directly or indirectly of any proposition, towards the supplanting or invading the King's life, crown, or dignity, or to make any invasion or disturbance to introduce any new Government, or to bring in Popery by any violence or force in the world. If I have, my Lord, been mistaken in my method, as I will not say but I might have been, for if the two men differ one must be mistaken, I might be of an opinion that Popery might come in through liberty of conscience being granted, and perhaps all Christians are bound to wish all people to be of that religion, which they profess themselves, if they are earnest. I will not dispute those ills which your Lordship may imagine to be in the Church of Rome. If I thought there were any truth in them I would be sure to be none of it. I have no design, my Lord, in religion but to be saved, and I had no manner of invitation to invite me to the Church of Rome but to be saved. If I am out of the way, I am out of the way as to the next world as to this. I have nothing but a sincere conscience, and I desire to follow it as I ought. I do confess I am guilty of many crimes, and I am afraid all of us are guilty in some measure of some failings and infirmities, but in matters of this nature that I now stand condemned for, though I do not at all complain of the Court, for I do confess I have had all fair play imaginable, I say as to any one act of mine, so far as acts require intention to make them acts, as all human acts do, I am as innocent of any crime that I now stand charged as guilty of as when I was first born."

L. C. J. : That is not possible.

Coleman : With submission, I do not say innocent as to any crime in going against any Act of Parliament, then it is a crime to hear Mass, or to do any act that they prohibit ; but for intending and endeavouring to bring in that religion by aid and assistance of the King of France.

I never intended nor meant by that aid any force in the world, but such aids and assistance as might procure us liberty of conscience. My Lord, if in what I have said nobody believes me, I must be content; if anyone do believe me then I have wiped off these scandalous thoughts and abominable crimes, and then I have paid a little debt to truth.

L. C. J.: One word more and I have done. I am sorry, Mr. Coleman, that I have not charity enough to believe the words of a dying man, for I will tell you what sticks with me very much, I cannot be persuaded, and nobody can, but that your correspondence and negotiations did continue longer than the letters that we have found, that is, after 1675. Now if you had come and shown us your books and letters which would have spoken for themselves, I should have thought then that you had dealt plainly and sincerely with us, and it would have been a mighty motive to have believed the rest, for certainly your correspondence held even to the time of your apprehension, and you have not discovered so much as one paper but what was found unknown to you and against your will.

Coleman: Upon the word of a dying man, and upon the expectation I have of salvation, I tell your Lordship that there is not a book nor paper in the world that I have laid aside voluntarily.

L. C. J.: No, perhaps you have burnt then.

Coleman: No, by the living God!

L. C. J.: I remember the last letter given in evidence against you discovered what mighty hopes there were that the time had come for extirpating the pestilent heresy that had domineered over these northern parts, and that there never was greater hope since the reign of our Queen Mary. Pray, Mr. Coleman, was that the concluding letter in this affair?

Coleman: Give me to say it on my dying—I had none since.

L. C. J.: Between God and your conscience be it. I have no other apprehensions, and you deserve your sentence upon you for your offences that visibly appear

out of your own papers, that you have not and cannot deny.

Coleman: I am satisfied. But seeing my time is short, may I not be permitted to have some immediate friends, and my poor wife to have her freedom to speak with me and stay with me that little time that I have that I might speak something to her in order to her living and my dying?

L. C. J.: You say well, and it is a hard case to deny it, but I tell you what hardens my heart, the insolences of your party, the Roman Catholics, that they every day offer, that is indeed a proof of their Plot, that they are so bold and impudent, and such secret murders committed by them as would harden any man's heart to the common favours of Justice and charity, but I think it a very hard thing to deny a man the company of his wife and his friends, so let it be done with prudence and caution. Remember that the Plot is on foot, and I do not know what arts the priests have, and what tricks they use, so have a care that no papers, nor any such, be sent from him. But for the company of his wife and his near friends, or anything that may be for his eternal good and as much for his present satisfaction that he can receive in the condition he is in, let him have it, but with care and caution.

Capt. Richardson: What, for them to be private alone?

L. C. J.: His wife, only she, God forbid else. Nor shall he be denied any Protestant minister.

Coleman: But shall not my Cousin Coleman have liberty to come to me?

L. C. J.: Yes, with Mr. Richardson.

Court: Have a care of your Prisoner.

CHAPTER VI

IT is usual to read in the report of a scene where the sentence of death has been passed, that the prisoner's wife was led out of Court fainting.

Margaret Coleman did not faint. Neither was she "led out of the Court." She heard the dread sentence in silence with her eyes fixed on her husband. She had heard the sentence of death passed before, and it had not taken effect. She could not now believe that the King would allow her husband to suffer—he would reprieve him as he had reprieved the Mother, in spite of both Houses. It was idle for them to tell her that the King had no power! She could see her husband in the condemned cell, they told her. Captain Richardson, the Governor of Newgate, was courteous enough to the unfortunate lady. The execution, he told her, might not take place for a week, and in accordance with the Lord Chief Justice's clemency, she would be allowed to see her husband alone—hitherto a turnkey had hovered outside the unlocked door, more or less within earshot. She had permission to remain with the prisoner as long as she liked.

The turnkey led her to the cells dedicated to those condemned to the gallows, and letting her in to one of these, locked the door after her. She and Ned were alone.

He crossed over and took her in his arms. "It's—it's all right, Madge," he said, and then he dropped his head on to her shoulder and wept.

He spoke after a time:—

"It's you and Clare. How can I leave you in this

inferno. How can God expect it? How *can* God expect it?"

She knew it was not the fear of death. She thanked God that he had played the man at the trial. It was the hideous insult of the Chief Justice's summing up that had unmanned him—the insult to his religion. This was the reaction after the mighty achievement of one who, when reviled had reviled not again.

"You must bring Clare to-morrow," he said after a pause. "She must see her hermit again before he plays a new game."

But Madge's turn had come.

"Don't, Ned," she said. "Don't! I have had as much as I can bear."

Margaret Coleman's one remaining hope was the King. She must see the King. The Duchess of York must get her an audience somehow. Hope was not dead in her heart when she left her husband. The King had not failed them in the case of Mistress Tyrwhit. Ah! but Mr. Coleman, the arch-conspirator in the Popish Plot, was not Mistress Tyrwhit.

Mr. Coleman was destined to receive other private visitors besides his wife. On the day following his sentence a visitor was ushered into his cell by Captain Richardson himself—a sign that the visit was of some official importance.

"Mr. Coleman," the Governor said, "I bring Sir Robert Southwell, whom His Majesty has graciously commissioned to convey to you the offer of His Majesty's clemency."

The prisoner looked up eagerly. Hope is hard to kill, and Ned Coleman was in full vigour of his manhood. Life was very precious to him—The good God would not make a martyr of a man with a wife and child. What, oh, what was the King's clemency?

Sir Robert greeted the prisoner affably. They had had some slight acquaintance in the old days. Money, in fact, had passed on more than one occasion from Mr. Coleman to Sir Robert. The prisoner invited his visitor to be

seated. The latter cleared his throat. "Well, Mr. Coleman," he said, "let me come to my point at once." The tense expression on the emaciated face before him was almost unnerving. "It is this: His Majesty offers you, what is known as a free pardon if you agree to—er—go through the formality of a confession." The emissary's tone admirably expressed the inverted commas against the words "pardon" and "confession." His tact was admirable.

Mr. Coleman's tension relaxed. "I have already informed His Majesty," he said, rather wearily, "that I have nothing to confess. Lord Shaftesbury knows it—they all know it!"

The knight set about patiently to explain:—

"Mr. Coleman, you have sufficient knowledge of political expediency to know what is required by the exigencies of the situation. If you are fully convinced that the King and his ministers have no belief in the Plot it follows that a formal confession of implication in it can do you no harm. It would be merely a move in the political game—a necessary act of policy which could hurt no one and save your own life. Your statement would be taken for exactly what it was worth."

"What about the mob?" Ned said. "What would these panic-stricken people of England believe?"

"They could not believe more than they do already," Sir Robert answered promptly. "The mob is so absolutely convinced of your guilt, Mr. Coleman, that to insist in a denial only gives fresh scandal. If you die apparently impenitent it will only do your religion a fresh injury. No, Mr. Coleman, it can only be your pride that can keep you from this step, and for your wife and child's sake, I think you ought to pocket that. You have done enough harm to your friends, God knows, without involving these two innocent ones."

The condemned man surveyed his visitor. "Your casuistry, Sir," he said, "would do credit to the Protestant conception of the Jesuitical turn of mind. I am sorry that I cannot accept it. I fear neither to give the mob

scandal nor to forfeit the good opinion of His Majesty, if need be."

"Nor to sacrifice your family to your pride, if you will permit me to say so," the other added. He was losing patience.

"I cannot confess a crime that I have not committed," Mr. Coleman said. His voice had become husky, and his face ashy pale.

"Not even to shield another?" Sir Robert shot a shrewd glance at the secretary.

Ned flushed. "By implication perhaps," he said, "but not by a direct statement. But may I ask, Sir, why you should be so zealous for my welfare when it was your evidence that prevented me from giving the lie to my accusers?"

Sir Robert met him deftly. "That was my case in point," he said. "Expediency demanded it. You were already as good as condemned. This evidence could do you no further harm, and no useful purpose could be served by discrediting the witness Oates at that time of day. You must admit, Mr. Coleman, that the contents of the letters which you confess to having written condemned you apart from any additional evidence, and your co-religionists as well; and that without them Mr. Oates's evidence would have gone uncorroborated."

Mr. Coleman bowed his head. It was too true, but the sting of hearing his own efforts associated with the works of the enemy was a cruel one. It had more effect than any argument that the knight had previously put forward. The latter followed up his advantage.

"You see, Mr. Coleman," he said, "your conduct has not been so blamelessly discreet that you should, so to speak, fear to break a record by a little act of condescension to a lower moral standard, done, not for your own sake but for the sake of those dependent on you?"

Ned was silent.

Sir Robert pursued his argument. "Let me sum up," he said. "On the one hand, by making a confession you simply repeat certain words to which those to whom they

are addressed apply no meaning, if the Plot has no existence save as a political weapon. Even those who believe in the plot will be ready to credit your 'confession' as being a method of adjusting the question of your acquittal—you will implicate no one by such a confession. As for the mob—as I pointed out, you give more scandal by denying what they believe you to be guilty of than you could by this confession. On the other hand, you die an ignominious death—abandon your wife and child to opprobrium, and want, and possible maltreatment. You do not even earn for yourself the title of martyr, for even those of your own persuasion are disgusted with the injury done to their cause by your meddlesome methods; and all this because your conscience has suddenly become tender on the point of a political manoeuvre, the like of which did not repel you in former days. Mr. Coleman, do you think, as a husband and a father, that you have a moral right to thus sacrifice the innocent to what I would dare call your moral vanity, and what your Catholic friends would call by the same name?"

Mr. Coleman lifted his bowed head. "Sir," he said, "I cannot find myself in agreement with you. For all I have done in the past I have expressed my sorrow and contrition; but contrition requires a firm purpose of amendment ere it be valid, so I cannot shape my present conduct on the precedent of the past. I have no desire for the esteem of my fellows—I have not deserved it. I have likewise forfeited the sympathy of my co-religionists by the mischief that I have done to the Cause, therefore I turn to God alone for mercy, and take my case to His Tribunal for He will have pity on my failures."

"I am sorry I cannot follow your point," Sir Robert said. "Self-made martyrs at other people's expense make no appeal to my understanding or conscience—perhaps your fellow-Catholics may grasp the trend of your argument."

His tone was hard and bitter, the sneer intentional.

"Convey my humble thanks to His Majesty," Ned said—then he looked up and smiled. "Methinks he will not be surprised at my answer."

Sir Robert stood regarding him with a kind of irritable curiosity. "You Papists baffle me," he exclaimed, "I cannot find the key to your lock!"

"If you did," Mr. Coleman answered, still smiling, "you would be a Papist yourself, Sir Robert. The key to the lock is the secret of the existence of Faith. Your trimmers and time-servers in the old days who deprecated the magnificent scruple of a man like Sir Thomas More bred a religion for England which was subservient in its nature, in its principle; and the consequence is that what is now called religion here in England is but a weapon for accruing wealth or power—a means, not an end. Do not your churchmen make a confession of this when they must needs find a worldly motive for the religious zeal of other persuasions?—for a man who practises his religion at great odds? 'Tis worse than atheism," he went on warmly, "this dishonouring of God—this making of the Deity a restricted monarch, subject to a Parliament of human circumstance and human ambition. When England understands the meaning of Faith she will hold the key to the mystery of Catholic action."

Sir Robert drew himself up. "I have no wish to enter into controversy with you, Mr. Coleman," he said. "I will leave that to Dr. Smith, who will doubtless convince you of your errors. I leave you to him, and may God have mercy on your crimes."

With the above suitable and pious phrase on his lips, most probably from force of habit—religion was pre-eminently a means for the decorating of the occasion—Sir Robert Southwell took his leave, genuinely sorry that his mission had proved a failure, for all his biting words.

His visit left the prisoner in great desolation. It had been his one remaining consolation that His Majesty was approving, in his queer, cynical way, of the folly of his whipping-boy. Now, he asked himself, did Charles, too, look with disdainful contempt on the moral vanity of the man who was sacrificing wife and child to a scruple? Poor Ned, there remained little vanity in him in these days, but the bitter hurt of the thought that the King

himself was as the others—scornful, impatient, disgusted, nauseated it might be—was the stripping off of the last rag of self-complacency. Edward Coleman stood naked on his Calvary while his enemies parted the garments of his reputation, and cast lots for the seamless vesture of his self-esteem.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Madge visited her husband, a short time after Sir Robert had taken his leave, she found him perfectly tranquil. He told her of the visit he had received but did not consider it necessary to go into any details. It would be libelling our hero to say that he had become independent of human sympathy, but he no longer found it necessary to unburden his grievances. The presence of his wife was sufficient solace. He had something to say to her, moreover, of an important nature.

"Madge," he said, "there is something that I want you to do for me. I want you to promise before you know what it is."

"If it is something that you wish, I wish it also," she answered, but her heart misgave her.

"After I am dead," Ned went on, in the matter-of-fact way that he had acquired, "I want you to go to Paris and see the Ambassador and beg him to obtain for you the 12,000 pounds that the King of France promised me for my services. It will be something for Clare—I want you to use it for her needs and yours."

"But Ned," Margaret cried, "they will say that you received money for your own ends. It will give colour to their stories! That money was to have gone to the Cause."

Edward Coleman smiled. "You've promised, Madge," he said. "'Tis my duty to my state to provide for my wife and child. The money is mine by due agreement for services rendered. If you obtain it, take Clare to the Blue nuns. They will give her a home and educate her."

"The Blue nuns!" Madge echoed. Her heart throbbed. She recalled the Mother's strange words as she lay dying. Ned had not heard them.

"Yes," he said. "They are more safely established than the nuns at Gravelines. It will be better for Clare, and you can also reside with them. Many English ladies do, you know." He had thought it all out carefully.

"But 'twill blacken your name," she groaned. "Ah, Ned, Ned, you could not have given me a harder task than asking for this money!"

"Never mind, Sweetheart," he said gaily. "Mayhap that they will blacken your name too. They will say, doubtless, if you secure the money, that you lived riotously on it, and if you fail to get it, they will draw a sorry picture of your chagrin."

He spoke prophetically. As a matter of fact, when the world had lost cognisance of Mrs. Coleman's whereabouts, an idle story was repeated by the scandal-mongering author of the "Secret History of Whitehall" to the effect that Coleman's wife had put an end to herself on failing to extract the money owing to Coleman from the French king.

"The Blue nuns are the King's special friends," Mr. Coleman went on. "They will go on praying as long as he lives, and I shall not be here to spoil it with my scheming." It was not said bitterly.

"You will be *there* to help it with your prayers," his wife said, unflinchingly. "Oh, Ned! Life is such a little day. We shall soon be together again; and meanwhile——"

"The meanwhile will not be mean," he finished for her.

Mr. Coleman's cousin Roger was permitted to visit him, in accordance with the prisoner's request. He was acting as the condemned man's executor, and there was much business to be transacted which the good-natured Roger was ready to spare Margaret. Mr. Roger Coleman was suffering from gout and could only get abroad with difficulty, and Ned fully appreciated the kindness and generosity of poor "S'please-Your-Majesty" in thus

keeping up his connection with the disgraced conspirator. Burnt Ely had made no sign. It must have cost the obsequious courtier not a little to thus imperil his reputation. Nevertheless his visit was somewhat of a trial.

Roger brought a special message from his wife condoling with her dear cousin Ned. "My wife would have me assure you," Roger said, "that she spent the better part of a day holding Lord Chief Justice's Scroggs' hand in hope of gaining him to your cause; and she vows that had she been but five years younger she would have succeeded. As it is she says, "'Ned has a pretty wit and a ready pen, let him make a confession that will transfer the charge to my Lord Danby or such an one that better deserves it than himself.'"

Ned could not help being tickled. It was so like cousin Coleman's wife; and there was consolation in the kindness that lay behind the flippant words. Roger, for his part, was full of lamentations that he possessed no influence with the King's present favourite. Had only Barbara been in power—well, he could have worked anything through Barbara. He simpered in the old way. Ned had always made a mistake, he considered, in not paying more attention to the ladies at Court. The Queen and the Duchess of York were no good—both might be nuns for all practical purposes. He considered that Ned had bungled badly in keeping aloof from the gay life at Court. A word from Nelly might have saved his life even at this juncture.

Ned was grateful to his cousin for his sympathy, but he was devoutly thankful when Mr. Roger Coleman took his departure. He brought an atmosphere, this good-natured man, who was really risking much out of sheer kindness, that was curiously incongruous and uncongenial. The condemned cell had become a little sanctuary—this place where Madge and he were spending their last hours together. Where they sat, hand in hand, and talked of the things eternal, and arranged for the little meanwhile with their eyes focussed to the wide sweep of Eternity. How trivial the foreground to the picture had become.

On the third day after his condemnation Edward Coleman was informed that the date of his execution had been fixed for the following Tuesday—two days hence. He received the news calmly enough. It was not until Margaret brought Clare to see him and say good-bye that he entered into the valley of the shadow. The little maiden viewed his new hermitage with marked disfavour. "I don't like this place," she said, "Let us play at something else!" And she buried her troubled face in her father's waistcoat.

Ned and Madge looked at each other across the little tumbled head, from which the gay scarlet hood had fallen. His arms held her tight. There was agony in his eyes. The figure of this bright-eyed child had loomed up large on his horizon and hidden the little hole which let in the light from the other world. He had bequeathed his wife to Heaven. She had really belonged to it all along, but this child, his playmate, his plaything, brought back all the dear human claims of daily life. And he was sacrificing her to this thing that men call Truth. To a principle. Earthly affection made a desperate bid for his heart. At that moment Edward Coleman contracted a cordial dislike for the person whom the chaplain of Newgate, rebuffed in his proffered ministrations, had nicknamed "St. Coleman." (Ned had heard this through the turnkey who thought it might amuse him.) All spiritual consolations save those offered by the said chaplain, had been denied him. Madge had tried again and again, without avail, to gain permission for Father Ireland to visit the condemned man's cell, but this was refused. It was all the more bitter since the priest was confined in the same prison, and perhaps within a few yards of his penitent. Of the extreme rigour of his captivity they had heard sinister stories from the turnkey, a not ill-natured man who plainly would have helped Margaret if he could in getting her heart's desire—the presence of the priest to comfort her husband in his last hours. The prisoner greatly longed to make his confession. In his humbled frame of mind it seemed to him that there were many

things on his conscience—if only he might make his confession and unload his soul before the end. But the authorities of Newgate could not feel themselves able to grant the request, they could only endeavour to meet Mr. Coleman by pressing the services of Dr. Smith the Protestant chaplain. These were declined by the prisoner with adequate emphasis.

Hope is hard to kill—there is something in a forlorn hope that is distinctly stimulating. After bidding her husband good-bye till the fateful morrow, Margaret Coleman instead of abandoning herself to her grief, sought the Duchess of York, yet once again to endeavour to obtain an audience of his Majesty. It was so difficult to believe that such prayers as theirs should go unanswered. And they were praying at Gravelines. Did the Poor Clares ever fail?—these people whose prayer could almost be *felt*?

The little Duchess bestowed what sympathy she could on her ill-starred secretary's wife. She herself was ploughing deep waters. Her own husband stood by no means outside the peril of the hour, although he had been exempt from the operations of the Test Act. One thing she was able to tell Madge, the King was at that very moment at St. James' taking counsel with his brother whilst Whitehall imagined him to be out on his pleasure. It was a way he had—Charles loved to hoodwink the busy-bodies at Whitehall. The Duchess of Portsmouth would be credited with the evening call.

"Oh, that I might see him!" Madge cried. It almost seemed that her prayers were on the way to be answered. The Duchess sighed. "He can do nothing," she said. "Remember, Margaret, the King has no power beyond what his ministers allow him. He cannot even save his brother from their malice—and then they point at his impotency and say that the Duke and he are at enmity. If the devil could possess a virtue it would be thoroughness."

As she was speaking someone entered the room and caught her last remark, which was spoken with considerable vigour. It was the King himself.

Margaret felt her heart stand perfectly still. Here was the king, in a private room within her reach! Surely, oh, surely, this was an answer to prayer?

The Duchess was startled herself. It was not the King's habit to favour his sister-in-law with visits of this kind. He stood in some awe of James' beautiful wife. He had never really got over the shock, so he declared, of finding that James's wife was beautiful. It had been one of his favourite quips that his brother's lady-loves were assigned to him by his confessor as a penance. Mary Beatrice was certainly not "penitential," but the merry monarch found her a somewhat awesome personage, in spite of her youth and gentle manners, when he sought her aid in influencing her husband in his course of action, as he sometimes did. It was probably some business of this sort that had brought Charles to her boudoir on this occasion.

He glanced at Margaret with no special sign of recognition as she made the deep curtsey suitable to the occasion.

"This is Mrs. Coleman, Sir," the Duchess said, "she has come to see me to find out if there be any hope of a reprieve for her husband."

"Oh, Sir," Madge cried, breaking in impetuously, "cannot you save him?" She clasped her hands in the attitude of prayer and fell on her knees at his feet. People really do these theatrical things when the occasion arises.

The reply was cold and dignified. Allowance might be made for the poor woman, but she was taking advantage of the situation.

"Mr. Coleman has received my message," the King said. "I have offered him full pardon if he makes a confession."

"But your Majesty knows that there is naught for him to confess," Madge pleaded.

"Naught!" the King echoed. "Ods fish! he has a full choice of what he may select for his confession. He may confess that I have plotted to murder myself if he will. 'Tis

the beauty of these times, a man may say anything he chooses, and Mr. Coleman has a ready enough wit."

Margaret stood confounded at his cynicism. "Sir, my husband," she began, but he deliberately swung round on his heel and proceeded to talk to the Duchess, ignoring her presence. "Can you tell me what ails the Duchess of Mazerin?" he asked, "she has turned crabbed of a sudden. You are intimate with her. Find out if it be jealousy or a genuine affection of the stomach."

Margaret felt the tears that had risen to her eyes dry up at their fount. What manner of man was this for whom the plotters at Gravelines and Paris prayed? She turned to the door and made a second curtsy.

Etiquette demanded that she took her leave, and this man should not see her tears. "Good-night, Madam," she said to the Duchess. The King turned round, and preceding her to the door opened it for her to pass out with respectful ceremony. He looked at the proud, tearless face, and the blue eyes full of indignation as she gave another very deep curtsy, and uttered her "I thank you, your Majesty," in low, level, icy tones. "You will be seeing Ned to-morrow?" he said. She marked the familiar name, and the changed tone of the voice. She marked, too, that His Majesty was looking shockingly ill; and she also marked something in the hard features—in their expression that she afterwards never failed to recall when the King's name was on her lips in prayer.

"Give him my love," the King said.

The last hope was gone. Margaret Coleman realised now, as well as the Duchess did, that there was nothing to be hoped from the King's intervention. There was nothing left to pray for now save that Ned might be allowed the consolation of a priest. She returned home and retired to the little oratory where she and Ned had so often said their Office together, and prepared to spend the night in prayer. Her thoughts turned to William Ireland, so near to Ned and yet unable to assist him. From William Ireland they naturally travelled on to the Mother. "Oh, Mother, Mother!" she cried, "pray for

him! Pray for Ned and send him consolation." It was that intensity of thought which modern psychologists tell us can produce a brain-wave and telepathic results between living people. Modern psychology as a "science" takes no cognisance of the dead. It would not therefore, look for telepathic results in this case. Big Ben's predecessor struck twelve at that moment. The fateful third of December had already arrived.

CHAPTER VIII

THE head jailor at Newgate, whom, ignoring any historical data on the subject, we shall call for convenience Mr. Keys, was seated with a few friends and colleagues in his private apartments at the Jail. Jailoring is a dreary profession, and its followers did not necessarily take a delight in it, as many romance-writers would have us believe for the better purpose of thrills. Mr. Keys, as a matter of fact, was suffering from a sincere and admirable depression at the thought of the fate which awaited one of his charges on the following day. He had contracted a considerable liking for Mr. Coleman. The "way" that Ned Coleman had with him had captivated the official who attended to him in Newgate as it had done those higher-placed officials who softened the rigour of their political views for love of Ned Coleman as well as for more sordid considerations. Mr. Keys felt, justifiably enough, that a little cheerful society would be desirable on this particular evening.

The company included his wife's father, a heavy old gentleman of slow speech, who sat near the huge fire and retained a vacant rather than an open mind on the subjects under discussion. Naturally the morrow's execution was foremost among these. Mr. Keys would fain have chosen something more exhilarating. As it was he led them skilfully on to the Godfrey murder, and kept the conversation there until the clock of St. Sepulchre's struck twelve. Then there was a sudden lull in the conversation. No one seemed to have anything left to say until the father-in-law of Mr. Keys, whose vacancy had become more pronounced

as he baked his brains over the glowing logs, made an observation for the first time during the evening.

"I remember a woman named Tyrwhit," he said, suddenly, "who used to lead the magistrates a dance harbouring priests—about ten years past it was. You heard everyone talking about her—a female that was! Never without some priest in her house saying Mass. That Ireland that's in the dungeons here was one of 'em—He used to steal young girls and take 'em off to be nuns, I've heard, and the Tyrwhit woman used to collect 'em for 'im. Can't think what put her into my head," he remarked. The company was listening, and the ancient narrator felt flattered at the interest that he was creating. "Yes," he went on, "she'd take the priests in her own coach to visit dying folk. You see, Papists believe that everyone is damned that don't see a priest afore he dies."

"Small wonder, then," someone laughed, "that Mr. Coleman is making a to-do because they won't allow him to see a priest."

"But Mr. Coleman is a saint," another cheerful spirit responded. "What do he want with absolution?"

"It don't make no difference," the old gentleman said, "saint or sinner, they goes to Hell unless the priest gives 'em absolution—If they be lay folks, that is—the priests absolves themselves, of course. Can't think what made me think of that Tyrwhit woman. They say as how she's dead and gone, and a good job, too! 'Twas a female, that!"

Mr. Keys, simple soul, was genuinely distressed by his father-in-law's disquisition of Catholic doctrine. Did the poor gentleman in the condemned cell in sooth believe that his soul was to be damned for sheer want of a priest? The reader will perhaps not be inclined to follow the inconsistencies of the human intelligence sufficiently to believe that at the bottom of Mr. Keys's Protestant but receptive mind there lurked a fear that Mr. Coleman's salvation might indeed depend on his gaining the priestly absolution, since he assuredly had the projected murder of the King on his conscience. He was keenly desirous of serv-

ing the pleasant-mannered conspirator, who had cracked his little joke with him up to the last, and whose dejection had touched his heart in quite a new and surprising manner. He even went so far as to deliberate on the possibility of smuggling a priest into the prisoner's cell, but rejected it as too dangerous. Small blame can be attached to Mr. Keys for his decision. His good will was undubitable.

The party broke up soon after. Mr. Keys was suffering from extreme fatigue, and the thought of the prisoner's plight was preying on his mind in quite a curious way. He went up to bed and removing his boots, flung himself down beside his already sleeping spouse without so much as extinguishing the lamp on the table. He would get up again after he had rested a bit. About an hour later Mr. Keys did get up. He rose, walked across the room, picked up the lamp and stalked out along the corridor leading to the cells, on the Press Yard side. He passed swiftly and noiselessly on his unshod feet, and finally descended a flight of steps leading to the dungeons used for the solitary confinement of the worst class of prisoner. He entered one of these—a vile and noisome hole it was—and stood there with his lamp, in front of its occupant, an unkempt, unshaven individual, clad in miserable garments, and heavily ironed.

It was the Jesuit priest, Father William Ireland.

Father Ireland was not asleep. The conditions of his imprisonment made his nights restless. The irons that he wore gave him constant agony. Father Ireland's sufferings in this respect are duly chronicled in the Foley Records. The heavy fetters had eaten into the very bone of his legs. He blinked up at the unusual apparition. Mr. Keys wore a peculiar mask-like expression of countenance. Without saying a word he beckoned the priest to follow him.

"Where am I going?" the other very naturally enquired. Midnight visits in Newgate were of ominous import, for all that the Question by torture was no longer the fashion.

Mr. Keys vouchsafed no reply. He merely cast a per-

empty glance at the prisoner, and led the way to the door. Then a possibility occurred to William Ireland. It was just conceivable that the jailor, in whom he had discovered signs of grace, might be taking him to see some Catholic prisoner—he had been told that a Papist of high position was to be executed on the following morning, but the name had been suppressed. Mr. Keys was a cautious soul—The unshod feet, and the extraordinary furtive manner all pointed to the fact that Mr. Keys was acting on his own initiative, and at some risk to himself. Without delay William Ireland struggled up from his miserable bed and on to his crippled feet. The pain was exquisite, but he managed to shuffle across the cell. The other had either forgotten his disabled condition, or else his mission required to be executed with all celerity, for he stalked on in front at a pace that the prisoner found it impossible to keep up with. He lifted the heavy chain and crept along as best he could, praying that the pain might not cause him to faint away. The steep steps at the end of the corridor were a fencer. He mounted one and sat down with a groan. He dared not call out, for the adjacent dungeons were occupied. Mr. Keys had gone on ahead, apparently oblivious of his impeded method of locomotion. A minute later the Jailor's face reappeared at the head of the stairs. He gesticulated to the disabled man, then, finding that he got no response, he descended again, and seizing the priest in his arms, bore him upstairs without word or comment. William Ireland made a snatch at the lamp which the other had deposited on the ground. "Thank you," he gasped. "Sorry I can't ride pick-a-back, but this chain's in the way. Ah!—" He clenched his teeth and drew in a breath. He managed to get hold of the chain in his other hand. The whole weight had fallen on his maimed ankles. "Where are we going?" he whispered again, but Mr. Keys evidently intended to remain mum. It was no doubt part of the arrangement.

They paused before a cell at the end of the upper passage. The jailor set down his burden, or rather dropped it, and unlocked the door.

William Ireland, still holding the lamp, crawled in practically on all fours—to that was he reduced! It was a tolerably decent cell—to the Jesuit it appeared palatial—Mr. Keys pointed in a queer, mechanical way to the bed. On it there lay asleep a curly-headed young man—in his sleep he looked almost a boy. William Ireland crept up to the bed and knelt beside it. He forgot the agony in his limbs.

“Ned!” he cried. “Oh, Ned, my poor dear boy!”

Ned woke out of a deep sleep. He had meant to pass his last night in prayer, but after a week of sleepless nights sheer fatigue had overtaken him. He had tried to pray—for himself and for Madge and little Clare, but the words would not come. It was no good, he could not spend this last night profitably. Sleep overtook him and he slept like a child.

At first he did not recognise the unkempt figure kneeling at the side of his bed.

“What is it?” he asked. “Is it time to hang me?”

So it was Ned who was to be the premier victim of the Plot that was not Popish! William Ireland made known his indentiy with all haste, realising what a nightmare apparition he must present.

“It’s me, Will Ireland,” he said. “Our friend has brought me to you.” He indicated Mr. Keys. The latter had marched out of the cell into the corridor, after one urgent glance at the others. Evidently there was no time to waste, moreover it was but fair that they should keep strictly to business.

Ned’s confession was very short, albeit that he brought it right up to date. He had it on his conscience amongst other things, that he had been cantankerous to the Protestant chaplain who had meant well. “Never mind,” the priest said, “you may be able to make amends yet.” He pronounced the words of absolution swiftly, and a few words of spiritual comfort. It was all very businesslike. “Go in peace, my son,” he said, “if I remember rightly I

had the privilege of hearing your first confession in a place very similar to this. We have not time now to say the *Te Deum* together, but we will say it all the same."

Mr. Keys had reappeared. He had walked the length of the corridor and returned now wearing an expression of vague perplexity. The priest followed him as he strode out of the cell. He looked back at Ned. "Our next meeting will be a merry one," he observed. It was the old Wildwood spirit. It had invaded the common prison at Lewes Jail, now it was here in the condemned cell at Newgate. Someone has dared ask what will our jokes be like in Heaven? But surely to some on earth it is given to share the jest that the saints ever enjoy against a world that sets such importance on the things of time.

Mr. Keys conducted Father Ireland back to his cell in the same stolid silence. It was clear that the Mr. Keys of ordinary occasions did not wish to be associated with this isolated incident. The father took the cue and resolved to make no reference to it to the jailor on future occasions. He got back to his cell with infinite difficulty, the episode had exhausted him in his reduced state of strength. The jailor walked on ahead of him and waited at the door of the cell until he appeared.

Mr. Keys having duly secured his prisoner walked back along the corridor to the flight of stone steps. Here his foot slipped on the damp stone and he fell to the ground, his bunch of keys striking the stone with a loud clatter.

It must be a vastly disagreeable sensation to fall asleep in one's bed and then wake up suddenly to find oneself in a strange place some distance off. This was what Mr. Keys experienced when he woke up with horrible suddenness to find himself lying, not in his bed, but prone on a flight of dank stone steps in some place which in the darkness he was unable to locate. He was a considerable time collecting his senses, but he finally arrived at the truth of the case—that he had been sleep-walking. After a time

he succeeded in finding his bearings and in getting back to his own quarters. He had no recollection of what had taken place whilst he was in that curious state of somnolence any more than the hypnotized subject has of the antics which may have been suggested to him by an outside will. Had any outside will been working on Mr. Keys, whose state bore a certain resemblance to the hypnotic sleep? If so, whose? It certainly was not that of William Ireland, who had no knowledge of his friend's need of him. It could hardly have been Margaret Coleman's. She had relinquished her will that night. With that "*fiat voluntas tua*," spoken at midnight in the little oratory, she had laid it, so to speak, on the altar. There had only been the half involuntary cry "Oh Mother, Mother, send him consolation!"

Mr. Keys, it would seem, had simply indulged in a somnambulistic ramble—a phenomenon familiar to science, and an idea present in his mind had asserted itself experimentally.

Ned woke up rather later than usual next morning. For the past few weeks waking up had been a painful process. Returning consciousness had dealt a hammer blow on his heart and his head had throbbed with pain of reawakened memory. To-day he woke and proceeded to realise that it was the day fixed for his execution. He was vaguely conscious of waiting for the hammer-blow. It didn't come, and he vaguely wondered why. Then he began to recall the event of the night. Surely it must have been a dream? He had seen Will Ireland—had received absolution and such ghostly consolation that peace had descended into his soul. It was too real to be a dream, and yet—? Then he caught sight of the lamp. It had been left behind and was still burning on the table. It reminded him at once of a canonical light, burning there in the broad day-light; and like a canonical light it bore witness to the reality of that which might have been held to be a dream.

It was true then. Although for sorrow he had slept instead of keeping his vigil—although he had forgone the

travail of prayer, the gift had come to him, almost in his sleep !

“ Arise not until ye have rested, O ye that eat the bread of sorrow for so he giveth to his beloved sleeping.”

CHAPTER IX

LONDON greeted the third of December, 1678 with great cordiality, and a pleasurable sense of impending entertainment. Coleman, the arch-conspirator was to be hanged at Tyburn, and quartered, be it not forgotten. The mob had been familiarised with Mr. Coleman's monstrosities by the ballad-monger, and also by the preachers of the day. London was certainly being well catered for. Mr. Coleman's personality had been shown to be as complex as the Plot itself, thus he was an extravagant person, fond of sumptuous living, and at the same time a lean-faced ascetic, worn with perpetual fasting. He had served his own ends with the sordid motive of enriching himself, and was also the slave, tool and creature of the Jesuits, whose teaching made him desirous of killing even the most influential of his benefactors for the promotion of the Pope's interests. His was the giant intellect that had planned, contrived and carried out the whole Plot, but he was likewise the shallow-witted coxcomb at whom the populace really enjoyed the prospect of booing and cracking jokes. Never in truth had the crowd been so well catered for in the object of its execration. There was no kind of mud that could not be thrown at Mr. Coleman.

There was something about a Jesuit priest, for instance, that inspired a sort of awesome respect. The mob had never dared to treat these diabolically clever people as they proposed to treat Mr. Coleman. Mr. Coleman was a Jackanapes, an unconscious comedian, whom his own friends had thrown over, and yet at the same time, by a really excellent arrangement, he was an arch-conspirator

eminently qualified to give the onlooker a cold thrill up the spine at the thought of his enormities. London, consequently, came out in a holiday mood to line the route to Tyburn. As for Mr. Coleman's friends, they felt it was kindest to remain aloof. Many had come to distrust him; all were more or less irritated against him. They shrugged their shoulders and kept clear of the high road to Tyburn and tried to forget the incident of the day. Those who still thought kindly of the arch-meddler were themselves in prison. Such an one was the Pere de la Colombière, Mr. Coleman's spiritual adviser. He had been committed on the strength of having been intimate with Mr. Coleman, and having had his nephew in his service. Margaret Coleman had arranged to drive to Newgate early in the morning to be with her husband till the last. She would fain have stood by her Cross like the Valiant Woman, and followed him to Tyburn; but this Ned absolutely forbade. He sat waiting for her in his cell, dressed in his black velveteen suit. He had fore-sworn the periwig, and his own curly locks, permitted to grow in prison, formed a very adequate substitute. He wondered at her delay, for the time slipped by with no sign of Margaret. A new jailor had waited on him. Mr. Keys, it appeared, had been taken sick and was unable to leave his bed. The head jailor's "understudy," by the way, had found the condemned prisoner's cell unlocked, but he did not give his chief away. Doubtless the sickness, which was said to be in his head, had overtaken him before he gave in, and would account for the omission.

Meanwhile Madge was sitting in her coach in the thoroughfare known as Old Bailey, held up hopelessly by the congested state of the traffic. It had taken Mr Curzen all his courage to venture into the teeming roadways. They had driven along the Strand, past the White Horse Tavern, populated with murderous Jesuits by the fertile imagination of the Informer. Past Somerset House, with its alleged associations with the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey. How often she and Ned had heard Mass in the Chapel there.

The biggest crowd would be at the gallows. There was a possibility that Mr. Coleman would make a tardy confession, and so avail himself of the King's offer of pardon at the last minute. Naturally such a confession, sensational in itself, would contain many new and appalling details. The populace almost hoped that Mr. Coleman would save his life in this way, albeit that the spectacle of the butchering would have to be foregone. None the less a huge throng had collected outside Newgate to see the prisoner embark on the sledge which was to convey him at the horse's tail to Tyburn.

The holiday air worn by the crowd was a hideous feature in the day's hideous proceedings. The gutter hawkers were driving a fine trade by selling copies of Mr. Coleman's characters and of ribald rhymes which they recited aloud.

Margaret's coach was brought to a standstill just against one of these. They could move neither backwards nor forwards. There were no well-planned Police regulations in those days, and it seemed likely that they might have to sit there for hours. Madge sat in an agony of impatience as the minutes and half-hours went by. She *must* see Ned—she had the King's message to give him!

"See you here, Mr. Coleman on the gallows. Who won't buy Mr. Coleman on the gallows?" a hawker shouted in her ear. "Mr. Coleman's dying speech, finely imprinted with his portrait, in his own characters. Here's your chance! Mr. Coleman's dying speech, all in rhyme."

So the time passed. The last moments that she had hoped to spend with Ned.

She dared not alight. She might be recognised. Indeed the peril from the crowd was so great that John and Phyllis, who accompanied her, would not permit her to attempt it. As it was, someone did recognise the coach, and a voice shouted out. "Here goes Mr. Coleman's lady. Make way for the Widow Coleman." Such was the mob chivalry of the London which elected to worship at the shrine of Titus Oates.

The episode had one good result. Information was

conveyed to Captain Richardson that Mrs. Coleman was in her coach outside Newgate, and a contingent of guards was immediately told off by the latter to clear the way. These forerunners of the London Policeman had a swift and effective way of their own. There was a stampede, a great deal of shrieking, some casualties ; and a space was cleared through which Mr. Curzen drove his mistress to the door of the Jail. They had wasted some hours, however, and the time had already arrived that had been fixed for the sledge to leave Newgate when Margaret found herself at the door of her husband's cell. He was just coming out. She was barely in time.

"Oh, Ned, Ned," she gasped. "They stopped the coach—I could not get here before." He took her in his arms. "I have seen Will Ireland," he whispered, "and he heard my confession."

She smiled up at him.

"And I have seen the King," she said, "and he sends you his love."

So they said Farewell, smiling at one another, as the Governor afterwards told his wife, like a bride and bridegroom parting on the night before their wedding.

Captain Richardson stepped forward. Mr. Coleman's "conveyance" was being kept waiting. The great door of the prison stood open. Margaret Coleman saw her husband pass through it. In the Press Yard she saw someone step up to him. It was the chaplain. Dr. Smith had made this last effort to gain access to the prisoner who had rejected his offers of assistance. In his written account of "The behaviour of the Popish malefactors whilst in Newgate," he records what passed between them on this occasion.

Mr. Coleman had previously rejected his offers with the answer that "he had but a very short time to prepare for death, and would not be hindered in the loss of any part it." He had thanked the chaplain for his repeated offers, but desired him to forbear. When he was brought down from his chamber on the Press Yard side to go to the sledge, however, the chaplain stayed him a little, saying :—

"Mr. Coleman, you did not think well of admitting me, yet know that I have earnestly prayed that God would give you true and great repentance for your great crimes. Stand not out in your denying of them." Some other words the chaplain used in addition, which are not recorded, to all of which Mr. Coleman replied in a short, quick tone, "Thank you, thank you." As the chaplain moved nearer with him towards the gate he said, "Sir, I must beg your pardon." "It being a strange word to drop from him, I asked him for what?" says the chaplain's narrative. "He replied, 'that I did not admit you, but truly it was not in any contempt of your office, but when you sent to me I was under some perplexed thoughts, and for other considerations thought it not convenient.' Then I told him that I would pray for him as a dying man, which he took well, and so we parted."

The contemporary artist who designed the Popish Plot Playing-Cards has represented Mr. Coleman as seated on the sledge reading a prayer-book. This, however, must be taken as merely a playful reference to the habit of piety which his enemies found so ludicrous in the secretary. Certain it is that the form of locomotion adopted in conveying traitors to the gallows did not lend itself to any kind of occupation during the journey. The prisoner was made fast to the sledge in a recumbent position, and so the process of bumping over the wet and muddy highway began.

The martyr's progress to Tyburn has been so admirably described by writers more gifted than the present chronicler that it would be undesirable to attempt it again in these pages. Mr. Coleman, moreover, was in no sense regarded as a martyr. It would be idle to try and find anything triumphal in his progress along the *Via Gloriosa*. The crowd hooted and jeered, and cracked jokes at the low comedy secretary—the man who had imagined that he possessed the power of a Minister of State when he was a private secretary to a woman! Mr. Coleman's former friends, as we have said, kept discreetly away. No one stopped the bumping sledge to ask his blessing. It

was altogether a humiliating spectacle. Mr. Coleman's well-wishers might well feel ashamed for him. By the time they had reached the Rose and Crown Inn, just outside St. Giles' churchyard, the prisoner had arrived at that stage when consciousness gives place to a kind of dream-state. The jolt down Holborn Hill and up the hill again to Ely House efficiently, and perhaps mercifully, knocked the senses out of the unfortunate passenger on the sledge. Ned had passed the stage when every word shouted by the crowd was audible. He was under the impression now that he was riding out to Wildwood on a remarkably uncertain steed, and the Mother would be very disapproving of him when he reached there. He was vaguely worried—that was all. Then they reached the Rose and Crown, and the hospitable landlord, as was his custom, brought out his stoup of wine to refresh the prisoner. They came to a halt, and at this juncture a little episode occurred that delighted the spectators. When the prisoner had finished his reviving draught, there sprang from the crowd a tattered and disreputable old man wearing a brown friar's habit. No one attempted to stop him. Many people, in fact, thought that the little interlude had been arranged for the further diversion of the populace—perhaps by the gay spirits of the Green Ribbon fraternity?—for the friar was an undeniably comical figure, his bony legs protruding below his shrunken habit, and the end of his knotted cord trailing the ground.

His face was radiant with happiness. "How now, how now! Brother Ned," he cried, "Thou go'st bravely, and see how bravely thou'rt clad!" He pointed to Ned's garments, now in an unspeakable condition, covered with mud and the filth of the streets. The crowd shrieked with delight. Mr. Coleman's care of his personal appearance had been duly emphasised in the current descriptions of the popinjay conspirator.

"Well done, Little Brother Ned!" he repeated. "All thy gold is gone. Is not thy heart as light as thistle-down?" The mob yelled with joy. Mr. Coleman had been so often pictorially represented with a bag of gold on

his back. The bespattered and dishevelled prisoner struggled to his feet—they had loosed him from the sledge to take his refreshment. He advanced to the other and knelt down in front of the bedraggled figure that so well matched his own.

“Give me your blessing, Brother Giles,” he said.

The crowd became silent suddenly.

The old man lifted his hand. His dim eyes, as blue as ever, looked upward at the grey skies. His face was radiant with something more than the peace which is comprehended by the understanding of man.

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee,” he said. “The Lord be gracious unto thee, and turn His face towards thee and give thee peace. The Lord bless thee, Brother Ned.”

The whole thing barely took a minute. The procession re-started. Ned had regained his senses. Splash! They had crossed the brook that traversed the Oxford Road, a little east of Tyburn. They would soon be there now. “The King sends you his love!” The words rang in Ned’s ears. No, Giles was wrong, he had not been stripped naked, since he had been permitted one human consolation—the King had sent him his love.

“You’ve dropped your prayer book,” a voice shouted as a cake of mud, an anonymous gift, fell on the sledge at his side. Never mind, the King had sent his love!

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When Mr. Coleman stood on the ladder under the gallows with the rope round his neck a tense silence fell on the crowd. Was the arch-conspirator at last going to make a confession and earn the promised pardon, and so cheat the gallows, and the big black cauldron standing near with the block beside it?

Ned looked round from his point of vantage. He recognised no one. Jerome Boatman was there, disguised in a big black beard, but his master did not penetrate the disguise. Hatred and contempt and, even worse, a brutal inquisitiveness was written on the faces round. No one

had decorated the gallows for Mr. Edward Coleman as they had done for Father Maxstead!

"God help me!" he prayed. And then, being the very human Ned Coleman of this romance, he heard the echo of the words, "the King sends you his love!" and he pulled himself together and made the little speech which he had prepared.

"It is now expected I should speak," he said, "and make some discovery of a very great plot. I know not whether I shall have the good fortune to be believed better now than formerly. If so, I do solemnly declare upon the words of a dying man, I know nothing of it. And as for the raising of sedition, subverting the government, stirring up the people to rebellion, altering the known laws, and contriving the death of the King, I am wholly ignorant of it, nor did I ever think to advance that religion (which people think I am so zealous of) hereby. I thank God I am of it, and declare I die of it, nor do I think it prejudicial to King or Government. But though I am, as I said, a Roman Catholic, and have been so for years, yet I renounce that doctrine (which some wrongfully say the Romish Church doth usher in to promote their interest) that kings may be murdered and the like. I say *I abominate it!*"

Directly the listening crowd realised that there was no confession to be made the silence gave way to the noise that an inattentive audience always manages to make. The speaker was officially interrupted and told that if he had anything to say by way of confession, or sorrow for his guilt, he might proceed, otherwise it was unseasonable to go on. He added a few words, protesting on the word of a dying man, that the witness who swore against him did him wrong, and also that he knew nothing of the death of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, for that charge had been brought against him in spite of his having been in prison at the time. The crowd was frankly bored. When the prisoner ceased speaking and closed his eyes, necks began to crane and people pressed nearer. A woman, a stunted square-set elderly woman of countrified appearance,

turned to the man next to her—he happened to be a priest—

“It wasn’t his doing,” she said fiercely. “Master Ned always got into trouble through others. Mark you my words, he was shielding the King—that’s the meaning of it all, he was shielding the King! The King ha’ done it—what they are hanging my Ned for!”

The other looked at her curiously. There was a fresh craning of necks, and he made a swift sign with his hand and muttered something in a strange language. It sounded like “*Ego te absolvo.*” His eyes were fixed on the man at the top of the ladder who had just made a similar sign. The condemned man’s lips were moving, but he was no longer making a speech, he was only praying.

Half-an-hour later, when the crowd had cleared away, the same elderly woman limped forward—she was slightly lame—and boldly approached the smouldering fire. It had not been thought necessary to keep any special guard over the place. Who would want relics of Coleman? A shed near by served as a sort of terrible mortuary chapel.

She looked round, and then made a sudden swoop on a shining object that lay on the ground close by the fire—a shred of very rough brown cloth lay near it, and a scrap of fine cambric—it had fallen out of the hand that clasped it tightly in death—the symbol of salvation, the Crucifix. It was the same that Arabella Miriam, had given Ned when he started out on his adventure, and Arabella Miriam, truant from her master’s domicile, footsore with her long tramp, secured the relic, and kissing it, wrapped it carefully in a piece of rag and limped off to beg her livelihood in the great city.

The King’s clemency spared the remains of his sister-in-law’s servant from the insult of exposure, or of interment in the common grave under the gallows. “Mr. Coleman’s estates,” one record tells us, “were given to his widow, and his quarters delivered to her for burial.”

On the evening of the 4th of December 1678, after nightfall, a little circle stood round the spot on the north

side of the church of St Giles-in-the-fields where, a few weeks previously, the mortal remains of Mistress Clare Trywhit had been laid to rest. They had opened the grave, and, thanks to the Royal clemency, they lowered into it—into the arms of her who had loved the weakest best—the poor broken, maltreated body of one whom she had loved as a son.

The parish register has nothing to say about Mistress Trywhit—we do not pretend that it could have—but the following entry is there for anyone to see who cares to verify it :—

Dec. 4th. Buried Edward Coleman (executed for treason.)

* * * * *

We offer no apology for introducing the reader to yet another scene in which that which men call death is the principal incident. We have made no attempt in this history to prove aught else than that Death is the gateway of Life ; and in showing the extreme vitality of the so-called dead we are even daring to continue the story of Ned Coleman to a period seven years after his ignominious dismissal from this world. Still, for the sheer pleasure of argument, we would point out that, in a story of what took place some two-hundred-and-forty years ago, the common lot of humanity must have overtaken all the characters. Edward Coleman, cut off in his prime, is no more dead to the reader than, say, Mr. Titus Oates, who, if we remember rightly, lived to a ripe age, since anything upwards of a hundred years must reduce the days of man to an equality of noughtness. We would have nothing to do with this pessimistic point of view, however. We claim for our story the virtue of a happy ending. Of Edward Coleman and Clare Tyrwhit, at least, we can say that they were “happy for ever after.” For Margaret, for Rose, for little Clare, there must be the intervening years—but what is half a century even, viewed with the perspective of two-and-a-half centuries? We take the

last scene in this story of Mr. Coleman, gent, and of the Plot Magnificent, direct from the pages of history, which contain no incident more dramatic, and none more carefully recorded by eye-witnesses. We give it in bare outline, as much as possible in the words of the historians :—

On the morning of Thursday, February the 5th, 1685, King Charles II. lay in his bed dying. In the death-chamber, and the room adjoining, were gathered no less than twenty personages of State, including five bishops of the Established Church, one of these being Bishop Ken, whose sturdy refusal to countenance Nell Gwynne had won for him the bishopric of Bath and Wells. "Give it to the little man who wouldn't let his house to Nelly," the King had said. This latter prelate had warned the King of his condition and offered him the Lord's Supper. The dying man had answered evasively. The elements were left in readiness by his bedside. The Duke of York was in constant attendance on his brother. The Queen lay in convulsions, brought on by grief, in her own apartments. An intense stillness of expectancy brooded over the Palace and its precincts. Everyone was simply waiting, as passive as the dying monarch himself. There was nothing to be done.

Then, just as a sudden breath of air stirs among the motionless trees on a summer night, something disquieted the psychological atmosphere.

It began with a gentle prick in the conscience of Mary Beatrice, Duchess of York. Her brother-in-law was dying, and she felt it incumbent on her as a Catholic to make some effort for his soul's good.

She sought her husband and exhorted him to do his duty in this respect and find out if the dying man would see a priest.

With Mary Beatrice it was simply a matter of principle. James was also conscientious, but the idea of Charles desiring to see a priest seemed almost fantastically improbable. The danger attached to any suggestion of this kind emanating from him was obvious. A straw might turn

those attendants at the death-bed from their allegiance to the lawful heir. James demurred.

Then there came a message from the Queen of the same import. The Queen had also become disquieted as to her husband's spiritual welfare. Charles had always professed himself a Protestant, but had he not invariably paid reverence to the relic of Father Ireland, martyred at the time of the Popish Plot, which the Queen kept in her boudoir? Mary Beatrice, who bore the Queen's message, repeated her admonition to the Duke, but still he refrained from broaching the subject to the sick man, merely lingering at his bedside in case he might have something to say.

But Charles had nothing to say.

Then, from yet another quarter, there came an appeal—human—peremptory. Louise de Keroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth, the King's favourite, sat by herself in a remote chamber, and wept silent, and passing bitter tears. Like Nelly Gwynne, Louise, with all her faults, loved the man Charles, and Louise of Brittany, was, with all her faults, a Catholic.

She knew that the King's hours were numbered, and she knew too well what the King's life had been. Louise, Duchess of Portsmouth, living herself deliberately in a state of mortal sin, was terrified for what might happen to her lover. The terrors of Hell are passing real to the evil-liver brought close up to death, and the Duchess loved Charles. If only she could see the Duke she might implore him to send for a priest, but the Duke was at that moment with the Queen, and she could not force herself into the Queen's presence at this juncture. Something must be done, for a priest, and a priest only, could save that sin-laden soul. Then she thought of M. Barrillion, the French Ambassador. He was a Catholic. She sought the Ambassador and told him her story, how the King lay there surrounded by ministers of the established Church and, as she felt convinced, at heart a Catholic. He must be reconciled to the Church. The Duke of York must see to it at all costs.

M. Barrillion carried the message to the Duke. The

latter became agitated. The Duchess was intimate with his brother. Could there be any hope? Even if Charles were overtaken in his physical weakness by the emotion which so often makes for what is termed a "death-bed repentance," would he not characteristically accept the ministrations of the clergy near him, who offered him consolation on his own terms, rather than make the difficult act of submission demanded by the Catholic Church? The Protestant prelate had offered him absolution without the ordeal of confession! He was, moreover, the one prelate for whom Charles retained a respect. The Duke stayed by the King's bedside, hoping that he would speak of his desire if it existed. But the King lay there silent, making no request. Bishop Ken repeated his offer of the Anglican sacrament. "I will think about it," the dying man said.

He lay there regarding his brother with his inscrutable eyes. The twenty personages of State hovered near, ever watchful and suspicious. It was death to any priest to reconcile an individual with the Church of Rome. It would seem like death to James's chance of succession, and the re-establishment of the Catholic faith, to compass the reconciliation of the passing King.

Suddenly James spoke. He put his mouth close to the dying man's ear.

"Shall I send for a Catholic priest?" he asked.

"For God's sake do!" was the answer.

Then—a solid sign of grace—the King added, anxiously, "but will it not expose you to danger?"

Half-an-hour later, the room having been cleared of all save the Earls of Faversham and Bath, whom James retained to disarm suspicion, a priest was ushered in through the private door near the head of the bed, which had admitted a very different kind of visitor aforetime. It was old Father Huddleston, who had saved the King's life after the battle of Worcester.

"Brother," James said, "This good man once saved your life. He now comes to save your soul."

The dying man proceeded to make a humble and sincere

confession, expressing true repentance, and a desire, if he lived, to amend his life. The Holy Viaticum was fetched from the Queen's Chapel, and some historians say that it was a Franciscan friar who brought it to the death-bed. The King received the last sacraments with the utmost reverence. All through the night he suffered intensely. His penitence was sustained—even the Protestant historians cast no doubt on its genuineness. He asked pardon of his brother, who remained with him all through the night, for the things wherein he had wronged him, and expressed contrition for his conduct towards others. He died at noon next day, on a Friday, when the Blue nuns were praying for him, as was their wont, before the exposed Sacrament, having given every sign throughout his last hours of having experienced the miracle of grace which accomplishes that rarest of rare things—a death-bed repentance.

Such is the ending of our story—the story of the Plot Magnificent—for such was its net result—after many years, at the cost of some lives, of much happiness, and many reputations. At the moment when it militated against the cause of the Conversion of England—the salvation of the immortal soul of the man Charles Stuart.

And who is it that would confuse values by comparing the cost with the fruit? Human prosperity?—the moments of this little hour?—The applause of one, two—three centuries?

Quidquid aeternum non est nihil est.

THE END.



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